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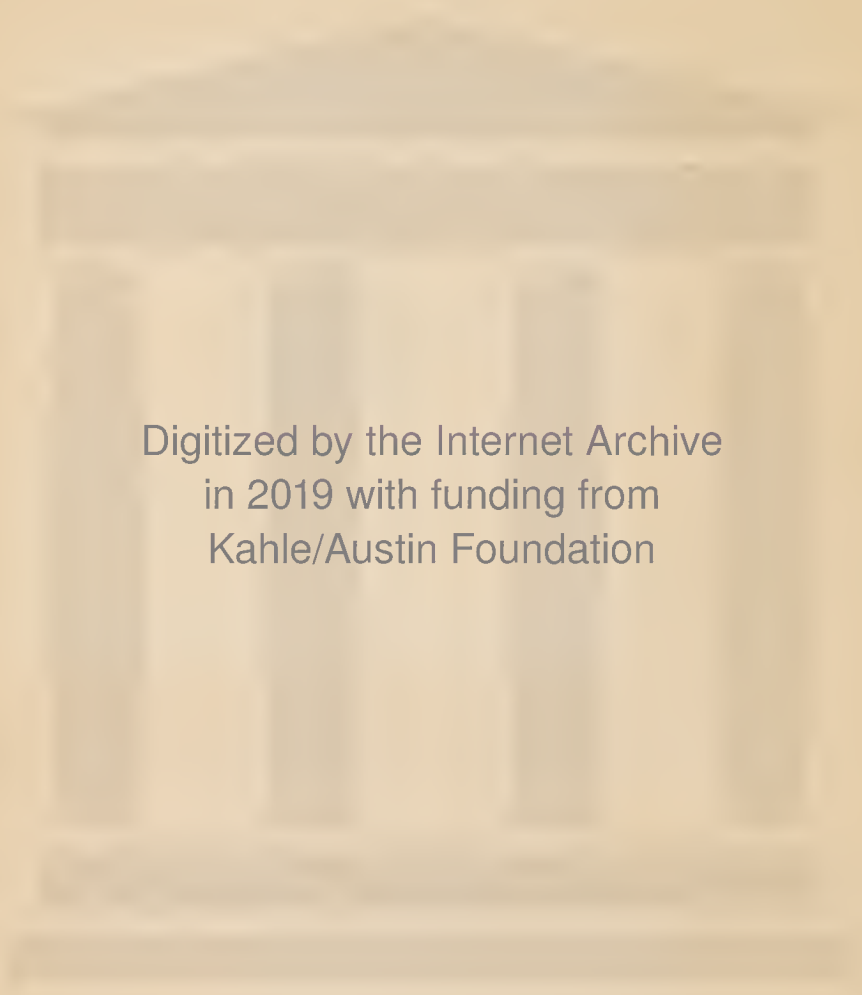

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THE MAN OF PROMISE

WORKS BY E. T. RAYMOND

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THE MAN OF PROMISE
LORD ROSEBERY

A CRITICAL STUDY . . . By

E. T. RAYMOND

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THE MAN OF PROMISE

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CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND ANCESTRY

The Character of the Primroses—Lord Rosebery's Father—His Views and Literary Style—Influence of his Mother—Her Beauty and Wit—Lord Dalmeny's Early Death.

"THERE IS," said Lord Rosebery once,[1] "one initial part of a biography which is skipped by every judicious reader: that in which the pedigree of the hero is set forth, often with warm fancy and sometimes at intolerable length."

The maxims laid down by the great are seldom applied to their own cases; and while so august a warning commands respect, it cannot be too literally followed. In dealing with Lord Rosebery we cannot ignore Lord Rosebery's family tree. Every man's life is a drama of which the rude sketch is given him by fate, to make what he can of it within the limits of the stage-manager's scheme. Infinite variety is permitted in treatment; the artist can to some extent make his own incidents, introduce his minor characters, decide for himself in broad outline for high tragedy, picturesque drama, comedy of manners, or low farce. But there are certain things he cannot change. Christopher Sly is under no compulsion to be a drunken tinker; a tinker may, without ceasing to be a tinker, make himself a saint and a great lord of language; but Christopher can never help being old Sly's son, of Burton Heath, and it little avails him to boast that the Slys were no rogues, and came in with Richard Conqueror. If there is no "fat

[1] *Chatham: His Early Life and Connections.*

ale-wife of Wincot" to tell the truth, his own private tormentor will never let him forget it. In every man's life the most important fact was decided before he was born ; the next most important fact very soon after he was born. But while a poor origin may produce extremely various reactions, a distinguished origin has one invariable consequence. Christopher Sly may school himself to feel no shame, but the lord will never school himself to feel no pride. The pride of birth—not, of course, necessarily the pride of aristocratic birth—is the one human weakness which is never conquered. The son of a somebody (as the Spaniards have it) will never quite lose the sense of being more than a nobody. He may rise to be a saint, or sink to be a pimp ; but he will never think of himself as just an ordinary saint or just an ordinary pimp. St. Paul could be humble as one who was once chief of sinners, but he could not help being proud, as (so to speak) the only public school-boy in primitive Christianity. As to the other side of the matter, no student of old record, no observer of contemporary society, will fail to recall the satisfaction with which men will remember that they are gentlemen when they cannot possibly forget that they are cads.

In approaching the career of Lord Rosebery, therefore, we have to remember that we are dealing with an aristocrat—that is to say, a man accustomed from his very earliest years to regard himself as separate and distinct from ordinary mankind. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in his *Hundred Days in Europe*, tells a story which has a certain appropriateness here. He visited London when Lord Rosebery was occupying the Foreign Office for the first time, and saw a good deal of the family. "The eldest of the four children, Sybil, a pretty little girl of six, told me," he says, "that she wrote a letter to the Queen. I said : 'Did you begin, Dear Queen?' 'No,' she answered, 'I began, Your Majesty, and signed myself, Your little humble servant, Sybil.'" So early is the idea of social gradation implanted in the aristocratic mind ; the child of six

could not feel herself humble in relation to the Queen without being as fully aware of her importance in relation to other people. The spiritual problem of the aristocrat is always formidable, as certain ancient texts exist to remind us. When it is complicated by intellectual generosity, a brilliant and lucid understanding which permits of little self-deception, and an inherited political creed which lays stress on the fundamental equality of all citizens, we have clearly all the makings of a tragedy.

With stupidity much, with insincerity more, can be done to reconcile an aristocratic temper with a democratic faith. But in Lord Rosebery's case, like that of the young man who went away sorrowful (for he had great possessions), there were wanting the elements of successful and permanent compromise. He was too intelligent to ignore, too honest to conceal, the fissure which grew and grew as the years wasted his young enthusiasms ; he could not but be conscious that the nobler part of him was dying, and with him, as with most men, cynicism was only a form of going into black for a departed self. It is not, of course, meant that Lord Rosebery, in joining the actual Liberal Party of the 'seventies, was doing something splendid, and in leaving the actual Liberal Party of the 'nineties was doing something shameful. Parties may mean anything, and often mean nothing—at any rate nothing of interest to honest men. But it is true that Lord Rosebery did once stand for the nobler side of Radicalism, which has a meaner side also, and that he did afterwards approach the meaner side of Conservatism, which has a nobler side also. He was like the unfortunate hero of the Ibsen tragedy. " They cling to their dead here at Rosmersholm," said Rebecca. " Now *I* should say, Miss," answered the old servant, " that it's the dead that cling to Rosmersholm." The dead clung to Lord Rosebery ; in the end they mastered him, and thus, in any review of his life, some sort of account of them cannot be omitted.

The house of Primrose does not belong to the ancient aristocracy of Scotland. By the standard of the Peerage,

it is, of course, of great antiquity ; but the Peerage is one of the newest things in Britain, and cannot compare pedigrees with thousands of unnoted English or even American families, though, by one of those freaks of the mind which contribute so much to make unreal both past and present, no American is conceived as having ancestors, while the grandson of an ennobled Georgian shopkeeper will be credited by simple faith with Norman blood. The Primrose, Primerosse, or Primros family emerges, as a distinguishable thing, a little before the first English settlement was founded in North America. Its founder was as middle-class as the first of the Cecils. In the reign of Mary Queen of Scots there was settled in the neighbourhood of Culross Abbey, in Perthshire, a shrewd business man named Duncan Primrose, who had a finger in many pies, managed estates for others, and himself bought any parcels of land which were going cheap. He did well ; the times enabled such men to do well. In Scotland, as in England, the old order was breaking down ; the modern world had begun ; the burgher's gold was beginning to prevail over the noble's steel. The civil troubles, depressing the old nobility, favoured the shrewd moneyed classes ; the position gained by the new wealth was extended and consolidated by the new learning ; the fall of the old religion, with the consequent eviction of the clergy from their old business of statesmanship, cleared the way for a new race of administrators ; the spoils of the Church enriched all who were in a position to buy, beg, or steal ; adroit courtiership completed the transformation from plebeian to patrician ; and in little more than a century families unnoted in the earlier records of the island had attained the dignity of great historic houses.

Such was the story of most of the post-Reformation nobility, and such was broadly the story of the Primroses. We find a son of Duncan who studied medicine and became principal surgeon to James I ; his son, again, enjoyed the higher opportunities of the law ; and very soon we leave behind all hints (such as the marriage of

a female Primrose to George Heriot, the King's jeweller who is immortalised in *The Fortunes of Nigel*) of the middle-class origins of the family. After the union of the Crowns the fortunes of the House of Primrose rapidly expanded ; it survived the Civil War ; it contrived to get a little something from the restored Stuarts ; the Act of Union gave it an increased importance in Scotland ; a century of prudent marriages, shrewd speculations, and careful politics assured it a considerable standing in the larger world of England ; it accumulated estates, honours, and titles ; finally, in the early nineteenth century, it added a United Kingdom Peerage to its Scottish Earldom, Viscounty, and Baronies.

So far the business is quite ordinary. But there are some peculiarities to note. That unerring eye to the main chance which distinguished all the representatives of the family in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and was not wanting in their eighteenth-century successors, is in truth no uncommon endowment, even among Scottish notables. Nor is there, perhaps, anything specially remarkable in the turn for dexterous courtiership which marked equally physicians, divines, and lawyers. If the Reverend Gilbert Primrose overwhelmed James I and his son with the most fantastic imagery of panegyric, the dedication of the Authorised Version of the Bible proves that he but followed the fashion of the day. Nor was there any lack of seventeenth-century politicians to whom Bishop Burnet's description of Sir Archibald Primrose, the first Baronet, might apply. " He was a dexterous man of business," says the Bishop, and " was always for soft counsels and slow methods, and thought that the chief thing a great man ought to do was to raise his family and kindred, who naturally stick to him ; for he had seen so much of the world that he did not depend much on friends, and so took no care of making any." The cold heart, the soft tongue, the cautious foot were common enough in the new nobility. Less ordinary was the fine intellectual curiosity, the love of learning, the ambition for the best culture of the time, which distinguishes

these seventeenth-century Primroses. We find one Gilbert Primrose spending years in France in order to get the best possible medical training. We find another Gilbert Primrose seeking, also in France, the pure milk of the Calvinistic word. He became a pastor of the French Reformed Church, and for some time ministered to the Congregation of La Rochelle. Finally expelled at the instance of the Jesuits, he was consoled by James I with a Canonry of Windsor. Memories are long in great families, and the distinct bias against France which was observable in Lord Rosebery may perhaps be traced in part to a hereditary resentment based on this incident. None of Gilbert Primrose's blood descended to the Victorian statesman, but the Jacobean scholar, who is still studied by the curious in these matters, may be counted a spiritual ancestor. Lord Rosebery once spoke, when compelled to address a meeting in a chapel, of the embarrassment of having to "wag his pow in a pulpit." But in truth he loved to preach; from the earliest there was a strong didactic tone in his speeches; and possibly one of the main elements in his failure to capture the hearts of his fellow Peers was his invincible disposition, a disposition specially resented by most Englishmen, to speak as if from an elevation.

The Primroses produced few soldiers, and only one martyr, who belonged to a collateral branch of the family. This was the gallant and unfortunate Sir Archibald who suffered death for his part in the last Stuart adventure. The Primrose path generally avoided the rude and thorny places. During the Great Civil War, however, neutrality was not easy, and the first Baronet, Sir Archibald, who had succeeded his father as Clerk to the Privy Council of Scotland, took up arms on the Royalist side. He joined the army of Montrose after the latter's victory at Kilsyth; was taken prisoner at Philiphaugh; was tried and condemned, but released; took the field again in support of Charles II, and, his estates being sequestrated after the Battle of Worcester, was obliged to remain till the Restoration in exile. After

the King's return he was made a Lord of Session and a Peer under the title of Lord Carington ; and it was he who purchased from the Earl of Haddington the estate of Dalmeny, which has ever since been in the possession of the Primrose family. Lord Carington's only son by his second marriage opposed the Scottish policy of James II, and after the Revolution became a firm adherent of the new Government. He was rewarded under Anne by a Scottish Viscounty and Earldom ; made an advantageous match with a Yorkshire heiress ; acted as one of the Commissioners for the Union of Scotland ; and died in 1723.

The Whiggish tradition established by this adroit politician was never broken in the main line of the family ; and Archibald John, the fourth Earl, was a person of considerable influence in the Party. He became of much use to Earl Grey during the Reform Bill troubles ; at the Court of the young Queen Victoria he was a loved and honoured figure ; and though he held no office, took no notable part in debate, and betrayed no extraordinary qualities of mind, he commanded that deference which character allied with rank seldom fails to ensure. He married early in the century a daughter of the ancient Wiltshire house of Bouverie, and his eldest son, Archibald, Lord Dalmeny, was born in 1809.

The character of this young nobleman, the father of Lord Rosebery, calls for some attention. He sat for Stirling Burghs from 1832 to 1847, and at twenty-six he was considered important enough to be given a small place in the Melbourne Ministry. In Lord Dalmeny the traditional Primrose Whiggism was modified by elements more modern. In his speeches and writings may be detected the note of " social reform " ; and there is a touch of something else which may be indicated in the generalisation that Liberalism, as it became less Whiggish, tended to become more priggish. The best illustration of what is meant is the thing now chiefly remembered in connection with this Lord Dalmeny, a pamphlet, issued in 1848, under the title *An Address*

to the Middle Classes upon the Subject of Gymnastic Exercises. Its didactic and innocently patronising tone, together with its easy fluency, make it clear from which parent Lord Rosebery derived certain of his characteristics. Lord Dalmeny's point is that the middle class of his time was physically deplorable, by reason of the neglect of exercise. "The lower classes are condemned by necessity to undergo the toil to which the upper resort for the sake of exercise or diversion. Poverty compels the one, pleasure prompts the other, to adopt the habits and enjoy the benefit of physical exertion. The daily labour for daily bread maintains the vigour of the labourer. The chase, the gun, the foil, preserve the health of the gentleman." But the middle classes did nothing to keep them fit. The tradesman, having opened his shop at eight, devoured a hasty breakfast at nine, worked till two, when he swallowed a beefsteak ; at five he gulped down some cups of tea ; thereafter he continued immersed till eight or nine, when he began to think that business might yield the place to relaxation or amusement. "What is the nature of the relaxation or amusement ? Does he brace his nerves, reanimate his spirits or circulate his blood by any gymnastic exercises, any invigorating game ?" Nothing of the kind ; he simply read *The Times*, or went to a tavern, or "sought the domestic hearth." Lord Dalmeny, from personal experience, recommended fencing for the tradesman with little time for elaborate exercise. "I have brought down the heathcock in Braemar," he said, "I have stalked the deer on Ben Macdhui, I have trod the Alpine solitudes of Switzerland, but never have I felt greater exhilaration of spirits or a more genial glow of health, more buoyancy of mind or greater vigour of body, than after an animated set-to with the foils at Messrs Angelo's or Hamon's."

This composition has been noted as a proof that Lord Rosebery owed to his father "his love of sport and his interest in the amusements of the people." Its true interest would rather seem to lie in its revelation of two eminently Roseberian qualities. It displays the

preaching instinct which seems to be in the Primrose blood ; the attitude of the father, as of the son, is expressed in the admirable Americanism : " I'm not arguing with you : I'm telling you." It shows also whence Lord Rosebery derived that almost journalistic sense of topicality which made him, even in the furthest decline of his political fortunes, a pet of the Press. Lord Rosebery contested with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain the honour of being the first English statesman of first-rate standing to manage a great political " stunt " with full gravity and effect. In minor matters, too, his mind was intensely sensitive to the unexpressed thought in the mind of the common man. If he had been born poor he would have been worth a good ten thousand a year to any enterprising newspaper proprietor. For there is no more valuable gift in journalism than the art first of divining what people would like to say, and then of saying it for them as they would like best to say it. This art Lord Rosebery carried to such perfection as to earn, not only the fame of brilliance which was justly his, but a reputation for clear and deep thinking which he did not always deserve. Translation, the enemy of the stylist, is the test of the thinker ; and of considerable speakers and writers few would suffer more than Lord Rosebery by paraphrase into undistinguished idiom. He was, in truth, best fitted to be the eloquent exponent of the views of others. In his youth he caught the mind of Mr. Gladstone ; in his later years his inspiration came from the crowd, sometimes of the street, sometimes of the clubs and drawing-room. But whether he followed one man, or Everyman, or Everyman-with-a-stake-in the-country, he was throughout his life rather a receiver, refiner, and distributor than an originator, and the relative tameness of the concluding phases of his career may perhaps be explained by the absence of men big enough to furnish him with the appropriate stimulus. The history of painting affords several examples of pupils who were greater than their masters, but whose greatness declined so soon as the influence of the master was withdrawn. It was so with Lord Rosebery. As

the disciple of Mr. Gladstone he had many points of superiority over his model ; the echo was often more impressive than the voice. But when the voice was silenced the echo grew fainter ; in due course it ceased, and that sensitive diaphragm that was Lord Rosebery began to give back mere sonorous confusion to the shoutings of a confused world.

To sum up, Lord Rosebery inherited from his Scottish ancestors a shrewd instinct for getting and keeping, some passion for preaching and argumentation, a fine enthusiasm for things of the mind, a distinct gift of courtiership, and a number of obscure but not unimportant Scottish prejudices and vendettas. But there is little in the history of the earlier Primroses to explain his possession of the qualities which, while giving him his peculiar distinction, were to a large extent responsible for the comparative ineffectiveness of his public career. It was, apparently, to his mother that he owed his more decorative endowments. From her he derived the better part of the almost girlish good looks which distinguished him in youth. To her, also, he was probably indebted for that natural grace of expression which, with its easy strength, with that virile courtliness which suggests the century of rapiers and satin waistcoats, made him incomparably the most attractive political speaker of his day. But it was also she who gave him his sensitive and shrinking pride, his impatience of criticism, the incapacity to put up with the rough-and-tumble of political conflict which were destined so powerfully to affect his life.

Between his mind and his temperament there was a constant incompatibility. His imagination was seized by the conventionally strong and stern man ; his historical heroes, those who extorted his most eloquent tributes, were people like Knox and Cromwell, in the latter of whom, by some mysterious process of thought, he discovered a champion of democracy. The qualities he was never tired of extolling were those of the harsher and more rugged kind—independence, self-sufficiency, frugality, tenacity—all the family of the Puritan virtues ;

he thought, perhaps, too much of the things that make society efficient and too little of those which make it tolerable. But in practice he was very unlike the stoic hero he idealised; while he enjoyed both work and adventure, too much labour irked, too much difficulty daunted; while he could dominate men on occasion, and was formidable in his occasional hauteur, he jibbed at the drudgery of patient and continuous self-assertion; his almost sensuous enjoyment of applause went with an exaggerated intolerance of censure or even of sarcasm; the man who pierced so many hides with the rapier of his wit was often tortured by the bluntest weapon thrust at himself.

All this belongs to his English side. Lord Rosebery's mother was Catherine Lucy Wilhelmina, the only daughter of the fourth Earl Stanhope, who married Lord Dalmeny in 1843. Through an eighteenth-century ancestress she had inherited some of the blood which gave the great Earl of Chatham his fire and brilliance and irritability—that hot blood which, to quote Lord Rosebery himself,[1] came with Governor Pitt "all aflame from the East, and flowed like burning lava to his remotest descendants, with the exception of Chatham's children; but even then it blazed up again in Hester Stanhope." In the Court of the youthful Queen Victoria Lady Wilhelmina was admired equally for her beauty and her wit. "A very fine creature, and also a very agreeable converser," she was described by a contemporary who saw her through the calm eyes of one of her own sex. Just before her marriage Lockhart met her at a ball in Kent, and was "seduced into dancing till three o'clock in the morning." Those who, at the end of the century, enjoyed the conversation of Wilhelmina, Duchess of Cleveland, had no difficulty in believing that in her youth she was not only "without exception the most lovely girl in society," but among the most accomplished and vivacious. She shone conspicuous among the eight noble maidens who carried

[1] *Chatham: His Early Life and Connections.*

the royal train at the Coronation, and was afterwards one of the Queen's bridesmaids.

There were four children of the marriage—Mary, who married in 1885 Mr. Hope of Luffness ; Constance, who became Lady Leconfield ; Archibald Philip, the future Prime Minister ; and Everard Henry, afterwards Colonel Primrose, who died in Egypt in 1885. Lord Rosebery, the first son and third child, was born on Friday, May 7, 1847, at 20 Charles Street, Berkeley Square, and was named after his two grandfathers. Just as Benjamin is a constantly recurring name among the Bathursts, Winston among the Churchills, and Nathaniel among the Curzons, Archibald is as frequently met in the archives of the Primroses as Philip in those of the House of Stanhope. The boy, soon removed from the dust of London to the sylvan coolness of Dalmeny, was still four months short of his fourth year when the death of his father, from the after effects of an attack of pleurisy, left only one advanced life between him and the Earldom.

CHAPTER II

ETON AND OXFORD

Lady Dalmeny's Re-marriage—Lord Rosebery a Precocious Child—His School-fellows at Eton—Influence of Cory—Early Travels and Impressions—The Incident at Christ Church—Its Significance.

In the early days of her widowhood Lady Dalmeny spent much time at her father's seat at Chevening, in Kent. In 1854 she married Lord Harry Vane, afterwards fourth Duke of Cleveland; and thenceforward the charge of the young heir lay chiefly in the kind and perhaps over-indulgent hands of his grandfather.

Lord Dalmeny, as we must call him during nearly seventeen years of his life, quickly gave signs of precocious talent. There is a race of human beings who go through stages almost as distinct as those of an insect, and whose physical and intellectual character is hardly fixed before thirty. There is another race of human beings who at four are merely the miniature of what they will be at forty. Lord Dalmeny was of the latter type. It is inappropriate to speak of his boyhood, for he had hardly ceased to be a child before he became a highly accomplished little man of the world. The first glimpses of him recall some of Thackeray's school-boys, with their grown-up ways, their vivid interest in dress, their enormous sense of their own position, their correctitude even in naughtiness. It is scarcely possible to imagine the young Dalmeny having anything to do with mud unless it were collected in gentlemanly manner through a tumble from his pony. There was no lack of animal spirits, but there was a deep sense of the right and the wrong ways of indulging them; and the love of sport,

which coexisted at a very early age with a taste for serious biography, was eminently a love for the kind of sport suitable to a young nobleman.

As he was at the Brighton preparatory school, so he was at Eton. There, in 1862, he found himself fag to one A. H. D. Acland, thirty years later to be a subordinate member of his administration. A rather delicate lad, one year his senior, occupied a similar relation to the heir of the Fitzmaurices, who, after serving the Crown in Canada and India, was to become forty years later, under the title of the Marquess of Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary in Mr. Balfour's Government. Between Arthur James Balfour and Lord Dalmeny there was perhaps only one thing in common, a hatred of examinations. While the future leader of the Conservative Party adroitly avoided trouble of all kinds, the future Liberal Prime Minister squeezed out of the life of Eton the very last ounce of enjoyment. He was carelessly good at games, but reserved his greatest keenness for racing, and on more than one occasion his determination to exhaust all the possibilities of Ascot brought him within an ace of the penalties reserved for boys who fail to respect school discipline. Such irregularities did not comport ill with the character of a young man of the world. Anything like genuine rowdiness Lord Dalmeny avoided ; that was for boys like Lord Randolph Churchill, a young scamp two years his junior. At a later period there was much intimacy between the Liberal Imperialist and the inventor of Tory democracy, but at Eton Randolph was beneath the serious notice of the superb Dalmeny.

"I first saw Randolph Churchill," Lord Rosbery wrote long afterwards in his vivid and sympathetic study of that unfortunate statesman, "at Eton—a small boy in an extremely disreputable hat. Now the hat was at Eton in those days almost as notable a sign of condition as among the Spanish nobility. Moreover, his appearance was reckless ; his companions seemed much the same ; he was, in a word, but a pregnant word at Eton, a Scug. His elder brother had left Eton before

I came, because, I think, of some difference with the authorities as to the use of a catapult. Randolph looked as if he too might differ with the authorities on any similar issue."

Lord Dalmeny was no Scug, and in the matter of hats could criticise without fear of the *tu quoque*. Such rules as he broke were, we may be sure, rules that any gentleman might break. He might be reckless with a hat on any occasion when school-boy etiquette demanded such disregard ; but assuredly he would not wear the same hat again.

Poor Lord Randolph was decidedly a tadpole of aristocracy ; indeed, he never quite emerged from the tadpole stage. Lord Dalmeny was the complete aristocrat at fourteen. He carried off everything with an easy magnificence. A master in the art of facile accomplishment, he could not only do everything well, but get credit for the potentiality of doing each single thing much better if he liked. He might not be actually foremost on the river or in the playing fields, but everybody was prepared to believe that if only he would train nobody could beat him. He might not actually be the best speaker in the debating society, but nobody could deny that he had the makings of a better speaker than the best. He was certainly not supreme in class, but he set all the masters thinking what a prodigy he would be if only he could be got to work consistently. Unfortunately, he would take little pains with the important uninteresting things. Much light has been thrown on this period of his life by an elder who succumbed to the charm of the young patrician. William Johnson, who afterwards took the name of Cory, was not merely young Dalmeny's tutor, but his faithful friend and fervent admirer, and his observations on the lad's character show shrewd discrimination oddly mingled with an almost frantic worship. "I am doing all I can to make him a scholar," writes Cory in his *Journals* ; "anyhow he will be an orator, and, if not a poet, such a man as poets delight in." Cory detected genius in everything the lad touched. He was "surely the wisest

boy that ever lived." His verses were not "commonplace, *pro forma* things." He wrote "flowing, simple, dignified Latin." He "enjoyed the old poetry as much as the modern." He showed acuteness in his estimate of Pitt, of whose career he made a special study on the tutor's recommendation, fortified perhaps by his own interest as a distant connection. He was "a strong but wise admirer of both Napoleons." He was "a budding bibliomaniac." But amid all this worship there is found the note of misgiving. "I would give you," writes Cory to a Mr. Cornish, on November 17, 1862, "a piece of plate if you could get that lad to work. He is one of those who like the palm without the dust."

This odd friendship—one suspects that the ardour was chiefly on the smitten senior's side—could hardly have been wholesome. The excellent Cory seems to have been, with much learning, a little foolish. He talks rubbish—or, worse, writes it—about Charlotte Brontë's handwriting; deplores that she "turns her *d* over," but rejoices that she writes "a good *s* and an *a* in the Greek manner, or something like it." He transmits wordy descriptions of the scenery amid which he is spending a holiday. He recommends Tickell's elegy on Addison. He gives Dalmeny his own rhymes to turn into French. In 1864 the pair go to Italy together, and Cory conscientiously notes every commonplace word and action of his hero, contriving to give the impression that he considered the Eternal City had derived a certain additional prestige from the intelligent interest, and even from the occasional tedium, of its distinguished visitor. The tutor is "charmed," the boy "disgusted," by "stumbling upon Cloaca Maxima"; at the Lateran both were "happy, reading the inscriptions on the monuments." "We agreed about the two bell-towers, St. George, I think, and the Mouth of Truth, and I enjoyed them all the more because I had never heard of them; indeed, I think the second the prettiest thing in Rome, and well worth imitation as a church tower." Cory was a strong Tory, who regarded Pitt as "the great example of political dignity" and thought

Mr. Gladstone ought never to have been Prime Minister, "because he is so invincibly ignorant of British duties and interests outside Britain." One of his letters to Lord Rosebery ends with "Rule Britannia," and though his influence failed to shake the traditional Whiggism of the Primroses it was probably not without effect in intensifying those tendencies which afterwards made Lord Rosebery so distinct from the non-Imperialist wing of the Liberal Party. In other ways the worship of the excellent Cory was unfortunate. The one thing which the young Dalmeny had so far wanted was firm, strong handling. He had lacked the control of a father; his happy disposition and physical competence had saved him from any share in the rough experience which tortured and almost crushed Lord Salisbury; and when the very master at whose feet he should have sat insisted on reversing the relation the last chance of genuine discipline was gone. Dalmeny saw an elderly man of great scholarly attainments looking up to him in reverence. It was not in boyish nature to shrink from the inferences of a spectacle so unnatural.

Lord Dalmeny was entirely happy at Eton, and his references to his old school in after life were always inspired by the deepest affection. "There is," he said in 1898, at the farewell dinner given by old Etonians to Lord Minto, Governor-General of Canada, Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, and the Rev. J. E. C. Welldon, Bishop of Calcutta, "one consolation in getting older as an Etonian—that you keep the pride that has always been in you since you went to Eton, the pride of the prowess of your school. I never knew but one Etonian who said he did not like Eton, and he very soon went to the devil."

Of Oxford he never had much to say, and for good and sufficient reason. His career at Christ Church was short, and it ended in a regrettable incident. Matriculating in 1866, he was one of the very last to wear the tuft which distinguished noble from commoner undergraduates. The Christ Church set prided itself on its tone and, as Lord Rosebery afterwards wrote,

"saw regrettably little of the rest of the University." One exception must be noted. Lord Randolph Churchill at Merton was within a stone's throw of Dalmeny's room in the Canterbury quadrangle of Christ Church, and the two young men became close companions. Dalmeny often visited Blenheim in Churchill's company, and here he renewed his acquaintance with Disraeli,[1] who had first met him as his stepfather's at Raby, and had remarked of him as "very intelligent and formed for his time of life, and not a prig, which might have been feared."[1]

The Christ Church set was one in which there was little idea of hard work and a great idea of expensive pleasure. Lord Dalmeny caught the prevailing tone, and as an undergraduate may perhaps be best described as an Arthur Pendennis with Lord Farintosh's money :

> Pendennis of Boniface had the advantage over his friends and associates of a universality of taste; and whereas young Lord Paddington did not care two-pence for the most beautiful print, or to look into any gilt frame that had not a mirror within it; and Guttlebury did not mind in the least how he was dressed, and had an aversion for horse exercise, nay a terror of it; and Snaffle never read any printed works but the *Racing Calendar* or *Bell's Life*, or cared for any manuscript except his greasy little scrawl of a betting-book—our catholic-minded young friend occupied himself in every one of the branches of science or pleasure above mentioned, and distinguished himself tolerably in each.

Thus it was with Lord Dalmeny, except that all his bills were on the scale of Paddington's, Guttlebury's, Dilly Tandy's, Snaffle's and Harry Foker's. But his main enthusiasm was horse-flesh. At Eton already he had, the story goes, announced his ambition to win the Derby, as well as to be Prime Minister and marry an heiress. With the larger opportunities of Oxford he maintained a stud of steeplechasers which brought him a fair degree of success in the smaller meetings. The fame of these triumphs, however, was his undoing. The College authorities could hardly ignore what was flaunted before their faces; disciplinary measures were

[1] *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill* (Winston S. Churchill).
[2] *Life of Disraeli* (Buckle and Moneypenny).

taken ; Lord Dalmeny resented them ; and the upshot was that he went down without taking his degree.

All this might show, as one admiring biographer remarks, a "great spirit of independence," and from the narrowest worldly point of view it mattered little to the heir of a great estate whether in such a matter he "followed his own inclinations." But in a deeper sense his abrupt departure from Oxford was a disaster. It meant that the young man's last chance had gone of getting what he most needed—the stimulus of competition in departments where his caste could not help him. At Eton, naturally, he had come into contact with only one class. At Oxford he had too little time to enter into rivalry with another. Even at the Christ Church of those days, with its rather unwholesomely aristocratic traditions, he could not have stayed his full time without finding that the palm could not be had without some modicum of dust. Intellectual pride would probably have urged him to something like systematic effort, and he might have insensibly acquired the discipline which school and home had failed to give him. As things fell out, he never felt in youth the sting of defeat by a social inferior, and never submitted to the pain without which no genuine intellectual victory is attained.

It has been well said that, though associated with two of the most famous educational foundations in England, he was in a very real sense almost a self-educated man. What he learned, apart from the acquirements of a brilliant but rather idle boy of eighteen, was picked up in his library. The circumstances were more splendid, the means of self-education were more commodious, but Lord Rosebery's case was essentially not unlike that of the intelligent working-man who instructs himself by the light of a gas-jet in a freezing bedroom. He had, in short, all the disadvantages—and they are neither few nor small—of higher education on the English plan. Except so far as he may have absorbed the "public-school spirit," its highest advantages were not his. A fine library, an excellent memory, a capacious under-

standing, a naturally good literary taste and knack, an earnest ambition to qualify for political life, did much to supply the deficiencies of his formal education. But nothing could altogether compensate for the lack of clash, in his formative years, with minds as good as his own. The want was the more serious because he had no necessity to conquer a means of livelihood. The self-educated working-man has always his foreman to give him a sense of realities. The barrister has always the judge to inform him whether his course of reading has been judicious. Lord Rosebery, free and rich before he was twenty-one, knew neither the bitterness of need nor the sweetness of small triumph. Much of his lack of stoicism, his impatience of criticism, his resentment of the inevitable brutalities of public life, his permanent inability to "get on," his perpetual readiness to "get out," his equally marked reluctance to remain out, the ultimate ineffectiveness which mocked expectations founded on a precocious brilliance, is traceable to the fact that he never experienced an early necessity to fight for his own. It is to his credit that, with so many temptations to ease, he preferred a certain athleticism. But, while he never had the need, he never acquired the relish, for the kind of battle that engages all of a man's mind and soul. Like the Cæsar who fought as a brilliant amateur in the circus, but never learned to command his own legions, he had the technique of the gladiator, but not of the general and ruler of men. He could not command because he had never learned to serve.

Lord Dalmeny went down from Oxford in 1867. On March 5th of the following year, when he was still two months short of his majority, the fourth Earl died, and we enjoy henceforward the convenience of referring to one subject uniformly under the title he made famous.

CHAPTER III

THE HANDICAP OF THE PEERAGE

Lord Rosebery's Resentment at his Exclusion from House of Commons—Its Effects on his Career—The Peer and the People—A Deficiency of Temperament—Was he interested in Titles?—A Scottish Aristocrat—The Influence of Gladstone—Political Studies—Amusements—First Troubles with Insomnia.

"WE HAVE no hereditary surgeons, or priests, or soldiers, or lawyers," said Lord Rosebery, addressing the members of the Social Science Congress at Glasgow in 1874. "We have, however, a large body of hereditary legislators; we have a considerable number of men who are hereditary legislators during good behaviour, for they, and their fathers before them, have sat in Parliament so long as they were solvent and respectable. We agree that an artisan cannot do his work properly without special instruction; but for those to whom we entrust our fates, our fortunes, and our honour, no such training is requisite. It is expected and assumed that a Peer shall take to politics as a duck takes to swimming."

These words betray but a tepid admiration of the House of Lords in its political aspect, and it is common knowledge that Lord Rosebery from the first bitterly resented the necessity of beginning his career in the chill atmosphere of the Upper Chamber. He once declared to Mr. Gladstone that he would cheerfully have sacrificed his Peerage for a seat in the House of Commons. That may be doubted. Aristocrats are like kings; they only threaten to abdicate when not likely to be taken at their word; and Lord Rosebery, as time was to show, was by no means indifferent to titular distinc-

tion. What he would have liked was what another statesman afterwards wanted, and would have overturned the constitution in order to get—all the social deference due to Lord Birkenhead and all the political mobility enjoyed by Mr. F. E. Smith.

It was of course a great misfortune that he was debarred from the training of most of his greater colleagues and competitors. In the House of Commons alone was there full scope for his great talents ; there alone could he find both a continuous interest in political work and a constant compulsion to play his full weight in the Party game ; there alone could he be forced into conflict or co-operation with men of many classes and temperaments. Early experience of that stormy assembly, early necessity to fight the rough elections of the time, might indeed have disgusted and deterred him altogether. But if his fastidiousness had survived the first disagreeables, the House of Commons would have hardened his mind, toughened his skin, endowed him with a more stoical temper, imparted a juster sense of the limitations and opportunities of statesmanship under representative institutions. He would, above all, have lost that spasmodic honesty which was, more perhaps than anything, his undoing. For long periods he could talk the accepted insincerities just as fluently as another, mainly because he had given no specially serious thought to the questions under debate. But when he found what he felt to be the truth on a question he deemed genuinely important, either to the country or to his own private interests, he could not dissemble. He had, as he confessed after one considerable indiscretion, to " blurt things out." Deceit in some shape or form is a necessity of representative government—and no doubt also of every form of government—and every statesman practices it in some measure, though very few indulge in crude lying. The effect may be produced, as in one distinguished case, by persuading one's self that the falsehood is truth ; more ordinarily recourse is had to cunning jesuitries of expression ; occasionally the result is achieved by masterly silence.

But the first step to success in British statesmanship is the attainment of the art of being, without feeling or seeming, a little dishonest. It is apparently not a difficult art. It is learned by every type of man, the tradesman, the "bluff" country squire, the political professor, the retired soldier, the most austere of philosophic Radicals, the breeziest of half-pay admirals. But Lord Rosebery never acquired it.

Since a seat in the House of Commons could not be, his wisest course would have been to accept frankly the situation and make the best of it. Instead, he lost no opportunities of showing his chagrin, and under the influence of an augmenting sense of grievance he failed to make the best of any world. The resentment he set up in his own order was natural enough. His constant reflections on the fitness of Peers, his continual production of schemes of reform, seemed an impertinence in the youth and a disloyalty in the mature statesman. Almost from first to last he was watched in the Upper House with suspicion and hostility. He entered politics as a strong Liberal, and not far short of a Radical. He lived to be something that was assuredly not Radical, and was only doubtfully Liberal. He carefully divested himself of every tie that had bound him to the actual Liberal Party. Yet, while Conservatism held out welcoming arms to much less important politicians in a similar position, no serious attempt was ever made to attract this extraordinarily clever man. Even when his attacks on his own Party were most damaging they were heard with but a qualified enthusiasm by the Conservative Peers whose game he was playing. They were willing that he should fight their enemy, but they were not prepared to accept him as a friend.

Their attitude was quite comprehensible. They saw a man with superficially their own tastes, a man who shot, hunted, kept a racing stud, consumed his rents in magnificence, a man obviously not indifferent to his honours or unconcerned for his rights. Why should he show himself scornful of his fellows, and contemptuous of the branch of the legislature to which

he was privileged to belong? It was well enough understood that a nobleman who had thrown in his lot with Liberalism must stand by his Party, however unreasonable it might be on occasion, and talk about "mending or ending" when the Party managers so ordained. That was all within the rules of the game. But what could be urged on behalf of one who, like Lord Rosebery, attacked his fellow Peers when no such obligation existed? He allowed the House of Lords no close time; indeed, periods of complete calm found him rather more ready than usual to bring forward some plan for transforming the one entirely satisfactory feature of the British Constitution. The irritation caused by this unseasonable insistence was not diminished by the manner of the reformer. The didactic tone was more marked in Lord Rosebery's House of Lords speeches than on the platform; possibly the sense of being always in a minority lent a certain bitterness which defied complete concealment, and tempted to that assumption of intellectual superiority which always antagonises either House of Parliament. Lord Rosebery, as has been remarked, always tended to preach, but ordinarily he showed due respect for his congregation. In the House of Lords he adopted rather the tone of a very consciously sane chaplain addressing the inmates of a home for imbeciles.

But while he alienated the Peers, Lord Rosebery never wholly gained the people. He succeeded in winning the rather puzzled respect of a part of the middle class, and was, perhaps, even more fortunate in his appeal to working-men of the more thoughtful type, who appreciated a side of him which may be most conveniently considered a little later. But some deficiency of temperament robbed of their full success his systematic attempts in early life to get on terms with the masses. It seems to have been his wish to do for Liberalism what Lord Randolph Churchill almost succeeded in doing for Conservatism. He wanted to extend the Liberal faith beyond the frontiers of the middle class and make it a genuinely popular thing.

But, never having been a Scug, he lacked the most important qualification for such a task. We read of him, almost as soon as he had succeeded to the Peerage, calling on all his tenants and cottagers, patting babies' heads, eating his sandwiches in a labourer's parlour, and "inquiring carefully after the health of every member of the family." Lord Randolph would have done the same things, but with a difference. No doubt Lord Rosebery, in his brilliant youth, was in one sense popular. No doubt J. M. Barrie, (a penniless student with no premonition of a baronetcy and the Order of Merit and Peter Pan's Pence) was exceptional in wanting to "throw a divot after him; he was a peer, those were my politics." But probably there was no labourer or labourer's wife who did not breathe a trifle more freely when Prince Charming had passed.

There was just that difference between his style and Lord Randolph's that distinguished Pendennis from Harry Foker when they visited the "George" at Chatteris. Pendennis spoke to Mr. and Mrs. Rummer with much affability—"with that sort of good-nature with which a young Prince addresses his father's subjects." Foker's behaviour was quite different. He "inquired for Rummer and the cold in his nose, told Mrs. Rummer a riddle, asked Miss Rummer when she would be ready to marry him, and paid his compliments to Miss Brett, the other young lady in the bar, all in a minute of time, and with a liveliness and facetiousness which set all these ladies in a giggle." If a rich man is to get near the heart of the masses he must have in him a very little of Pendennis and a good deal of Foker. He must be able to transact convincingly what Lord Rosebery once contemptuously called "the Tom, Dick, and Harry business."[1] Lord Rosebery had too little of Tom, Dick, or Harry in his own composition to make his way to the hearts of any one of those honest fellows.

The absence of the Foker spirit may be the real explanation of a little incident which befell Lord Rosebery while studying the working-man at first hand at an

[1] *Sir Robert Peel.*

Artisans' Institution on the north side of the Strand. The Rev. Henry Solly, in *These Eighty Years*, told the oft-quoted story of how, during a debate at this place, a Republican saddler referred to the Earl as "Mr. Rosebery."

> Whereby I rose at once and said that Mr. Elliott was quite at liberty to abolish the House of Lords if he could constitutionally, as well as all titles into the bargain, but that he was not at liberty to be rude to my guests, and that I would not allow it. A considerable portion of the meeting no doubt sympathised with Elliott in his Republican views, but it went so heartily with me that he did not repeat the offence. . . . When the meeting was over and Lord Rosebery was going, I said we were greatly obliged to him for presiding, and I was sorry this man had behaved rudely. "Oh," said Lord Rosebery, "if these men only knew how little we care for our titles they wouldn't make such a fuss about them," and, seeing Elliott, with others, standing by the coffee-bar as he went out, he held out his hand, saying "Come, Mr. Elliott, let us shake hands: I'm not such a bad fellow, after all." When I saw Lord Lyttelton a few days afterwards, and told him of it, he replied: "Oh, I'm not in the least surprised at Lord Rosebery shaking hands with Elliott; I only wonder at Elliott's shaking hands with him!"

A somewhat reverential note is usually imported into the narration of this incident, which is generally interpreted as illustrating the insolent intolerance of the working-man in contrast with the democratic heartiness of the Peer. But while rudeness is always to be deplored, there is perhaps a word to be said for Mr. Elliott. It is not nice to feel that one is being studied at first hand, and the earnest young nobleman who embarks on such a course of observation is taking a liberty the converse of which would be hotly resented, if it were happily not quite impossible for missions of scientific investigation from Hoxton to penetrate to the dignified interiors of Pall Mall and Berkeley-square. A nobleman cannot be blamed for being a nobleman, but, as Mrs. Gamp would put it, "he was born in a wale and must take the consequences of sich a sitiwation." It is a situation far from favourable to easy mixing with the masses, a situation so difficult that mere tact cannot conquer; and the Fokerian spirit, which really

does disarm the Elliotts of the under-world, is an exceedingly rare endowment.

But there is another aspect of this matter which may deserve some small attention. "If these men," said Lord Rosebery, "only knew how little we care for our titles they would not make such a fuss about them." Is that quite true in any case? Was it quite true in the particular case of Lord Rosebery? Lord Rosebery finished his active career as Earl of Rosebery, Earl of Midlothian, Viscount Rosebery, Viscount Mentmore of Mentmore, Viscount of Inverkeithing, Baron Primrose and Dalmeny, Baron Dalmeny and Primrose, Baron Epsom of Epsom, Knight of the Garter, Knight of the Thistle, and Wearer of the Royal Victorian Chain. Some of these titles were his by succession; but others were bestowed on him, at an age, when, if ever, men think little of such things. That he anxiously sought honours or that he took absurd pride in them is not probable, though it is certain that he did much covet the Garter. But we may question whether at any time he felt the indifference which he not infrequently suggested. One is reminded of a passage in Macaulay's famous study of Halifax: "Rank and power had strong attractions for him. He pretended, indeed, that he considered titles and great offices as baits which could allure none but fools, that he hated business, pomp and pageantry, and that his dearest wish was to escape from the bustle and glitter of Whitehall to the quiet woods which surrounded his ancient mansion in Nottinghamshire; but his conduct was not a little at variance with his professions. In truth he wished to command the respect at once of courtiers and of philosophers, to be admired for attaining high dignities, and to be at the same time admired for despising them." Lord Rosebery, also, seems to have desired at once the superiority of rank and the superiority of being superior to rank.

Yet the contrast between this weakness and the scorn he so often expressed for the House of Lords as a political institution need imply no insincerity. The

inconsistency was partly due to a very comprehensible human weakness, but partly also to a fact on which too little emphasis has been laid. Because Lord Rosebery spoke and wrote extraordinarily good English, because he understood, as few Scots do, the distinction between "should" and "would," because he lived a great part of his time at Mentmore and at the Durdans at Epsom, because he was a great figure in London Society and revealed the ordinary tastes of an English territorial magnate, it has been customary to think of him as a typical English aristocrat. He was emphatically an aristocrat, but he was emphatically not English ; and much that is significant in his career and his character will be missed unless it is remembered that he was, first and foremost, a Scot. A Scottish aristocrat has more than a sufficiency of family, personal, and class pride ; but there is no particular reason why the House of Lords should appeal to him as a venerable institution. To him it is really a very modern thing and, worse, a very English thing. His connection with it has not been long in years ; his part in it has not been one to inflame the imagination. He can only enter it by the shabby back-door of an incidental United Kingdom title, or by the strait wicket of election as a representative Peer. It calls up no vision of mail-clad crusaders and stately Plantagenet Barons, but only of dexterous wirepullers in periwigs and silk stockings. He may think well of it as a practical device ; he has no passion for it as a historic institution.

In other ways Lord Rosebery's Scotticism made it difficult for him to fit precisely into any English scheme of things. A Scottish aristocrat, like the generality of Scots, is naturally an Imperialist ; it was the lure of Empire which tempted the Scot to accept the Union ; it is his share in the Empire which recompenses him for the loss of separate nationality. He cannot be a Little Englander for the same reason that he cannot be a Big Englander or an Englander of any size, shape, or pattern ; and so far as the Liberal Party stood for non-Imperialism Lord Rosebery was bound to become ulti-

mately out of sympathy with it, though for a time the great influence of Mr. Gladstone concealed, if it did not diminish, the incompatibility.

But equally impossible was it for Lord Rosebery to become a Tory after the English fashion. There are plenty of Tories in Scotland, and usually they are Tories far more bitter and logical than the most pronounced English variety. But they are always even more Scottish than Tory. A Scottish aristocrat may be, and generally is, especially tenacious of all his rights and privileges, and so far is the natural ally of the English aristocrat ; but on other matters he thinks quite another set of thoughts ; something in the very air of his country gives him a reverence for intellect, a sense of fundamental human equality, and an admiration for those qualities which make men rise rather than for those which make them stagnate.

The English nobleman is an enlarged squire. No other nobility, it has often been remarked, has so little the characteristics of a caste. No rich man need despair of getting a peerage ; every Peer must be reconciled to the thought that the great majority of his descendants must sink back, within a brief period, into the undistinguished mass. Macaulay and others have written rhapsodically concerning the democratic virtues of this system. " The yeoman," we are told, " was not inclined to murmur at dignities to which his own children might rise ; the grandee was not inclined to insult a class into which his own children must descend."

In all this there is a certain truth ; the English aristocracy has in general been liberal and progressive. But the same polity which prevented the formation of a strict noble caste also favoured the spread of aristocratic feeling as well as the multiplication of rich men and great houses, and it is probably the explanation of the fact that the spiritual isolation of the English upper classes has been carried so far. While the definite privileges of class were in old times less marked in England than in most countries, there has long attached to the status of the English gentleman a sanctity accorded

to no equivalent position elsewhere. The English gentleman may be incidentally admired because he is a soldier, or a governor, or a magistrate, or a man of ancient pedigree. But reverence is primarily paid to him simply because he is a gentleman. In Voltaire's time England on the whole was rather a freer country than it is to-day, at least for citizens economically independent. France was a naked despotism. If an English squire wanted to lock up his son or his neighbour he could only proceed within the law ; any French lordling who could afford to bribe a courtier had a *lettre de cachet* to his hand. But when Voltaire came to constitutional England from enslaved France, he found Congreve much prouder of being a gentleman than of having written *The Way of the World*, or *The Mourning Bride*. Voltaire was surprised. Poets and dramatists in his own country were considerable people, in whom everybody took an interest ; petty nobles were people of consequence only to those they had the power of annoying. Much has happened since Voltaire's day in both countries ; but in France still they do not think much of gentlemen who are only gentlemen, and in modern England a great genius like Meredith could torture himself with the fear that he might be thought something less than a gentleman. With aristocracy less than ever a caste, the spiritual gulf between rich and poor is at least as wide as ever. No English squire, whether of old or new family, ever thought of himself as being, beneath his shooting-jacket and rank, just a human being like his labourers. This failure of imagination often makes for practical success ; if the squire treats his labourers rather like his horses, it must be remembered that he is generally extremely fond of his horses. But he probably does not imagine, Red-Indian fashion, that he will see his horses in heaven, and he would have some difficulty in conceiving a future state in which his butler, his game-keeper, and his gardener's boy should call him by his Christian name.

If the English aristocrat may be called an enlarged squire the Scottish aristocrat is rather a reduced king.

In Scotland there is no such thing as a squire ; it is not for nothing that any land-owner is called a laird. For whether he is what remains of a tribal chief, or what has risen from a tradesman speculating in land, the relations between the laird and his tenants are harder, more despotic, less vague and kindly than on the English countryside. Rights are more rigorously exacted. There is a bitter logic of getting full money's worth for money. There is no dim frontier-land in which a careless good-nature, a sense of what position compels, a respect for the opinion of one's neighbours, play their part. The laird is a lord, and is determined to have all the rights of lordship, in coin or in authority. But while he is thus strict in the full assertion of every claim, he does not feel, as does the English squire, that men are made in two images. Indeed, his insistence on a bargain being a bargain is a kind of recognition of human equality ; it is like realising that a man is too much of a man to be insulted by the offer of a gratuity. We have in everything Scottish these two qualities—a harsher interpretation of the temporal difference between man and man, a far nobler sense of the things in which master and servant, noble and peasant, are equal before the same sublimities. It was, I think, Mr. Chesterton who pointed out that while the serving-men of the Tory Scott possess distinguishable souls, those of the Radical Dickens have to be content with a sense of humour. Certainly there is no hint that Dickens ever thought of Sam Weller having a soul. But Scott's servants are not only kindly, faithful, and humorous ; they have dignity ; they " know their place," not merely before their masters, but before the Master, and in that consciousness of the equality of all men before the Eternal they glide quite naturally on occasion from trite rationalism to a moving and tremendous eloquence. There is only one other writer of English (apart from the translators of the Bible) who could do things of precisely this sort ; his name, curiously enough, was Robert Burns, and he is confidently believed to have been of Scottish extraction.

This difference between the English and the Scottish character is capable of easy explanation. There was in Scotland no interval between the creed of St. Francis and the creed of John Knox and, widely as they differed, they were alike in this, that inside the Church they knew no ladies and gentlemen, but only men and women. In Scotland, also, there was no interval between the culture of Catholicism and the culture of Calvinism. There was not in Scotland, as in England, a period in which the idea of religion became intimately associated with the idea of respect for persons. There was not in Scotland, as in England, a period in which the idea of scholarship became involved with the idea of gentlemanliness. Probably never in Scotland has a rich man wondered, in his idle moments, what can be the arrangements for servants in the hereafter, since it was unthinkable that the gentleman and his man, the lady and her maid, could mingle as equals in heaven. Probably never in Scotland has it occurred to the most arrogant aristocrat that there is something absurd, monstrous, or presumptuous in the association of learning and poverty. If a genial and charitable English man of wealth found a blacksmith who knew Greek, his first impulse would be to get the man somewhere where they would teach him not to be a blacksmith. He would feel that Greek was no good to a blacksmith ; that Greek was a thing for a scholar and a gentleman ; and that since the blacksmith showed leanings towards gentlemanliness the kindly thing was to help him to be a gentleman. It would never by any chance strike him that, if a gentleman is the better for Greek, so also is a blacksmith ; and that there is no more reason why a Greek-reading blacksmith should cease to be a blacksmith than there is why the Greek-reading gentleman should cease to be a gentleman.

Now that is not the way of thought in Scotland. There is in no Scotsman's mind any idea of a necessary connection between poverty and illiteracy or half-culture. He does not marvel that a labourer should develop a strong intellectual curiosity. He sees

nothing funny (or for that matter nothing specially splendid) in a waiter wanting to master Homer. It is a proof of the vivid contrast between the habit of mind of the two countries that the mere crossing of the border by an inhabitant of either produces a considerable modification of view. The Englishman who, genially or cruelly, would laugh at a bookish English labourer, finds himself respecting a learned Scottish ploughman. The Scot who thinks it a most natural thing that a waiter should go to Aberdeen or St. Andrews, supporting himself in vacation by his calling, and living on herrings and oatmeal during term-time, insensibly begins to feel, after a short time spent in England, that such thirst for knowledge is presumptuous on the part of an Englishman of similar station. The Tory Englishman tends to be a Radical in relation to Scotland ; he approves warmly that very " independence " which he would be prone to resent in one of his own humbler countrymen ; he delights in the Scottish upper-gardener's assertion of a human equality which he would warmly resent in the case of the English under-gardener. The Radical Scot tends to become a Tory in relation to England ; he would be unhappy indeed if many young men spent half the year at Balliol and the other half in Soho ; for that would be the infringement of a Scottish right, a menace to the Scottish monopoly.

Lord Rosebery, though born of an English mother, was a very complete Scot. He had several sincere loyalties—that of a Scot to Scotland, that of a British citizen to the British Empire, that of a Londoner to London, that of an intellectual to intellect. But he was never less an English Liberal than when he was Liberal Prime Minister, and never less an English Tory than when he fiercely denounced the Budget of 1909. As a landlord and aristocrat he fought the supposed enemies of the aristocrat and the landlord ; but he could never avoid the temptation of firing an odd volley into the ranks of his allies. For, despite many superficial resemblances to the English squires

who shared his passion for sport and his fancy for politics, he was in many ways at least as far apart from them as from the Nonconformist ministers who rebuked him for horse-racing.

Youth, however, is always imitative ; and it was some time before the sharpest eye could have discerned tendencies likely to make Lord Rosebery a disruptive force in his Party. He had fallen almost at once under the witchery of Mr. Gladstone's influence. With his usual kindliness for a young patrician, the Liberal statesman had marked the young Scottish Earl as likely to do him credit as a pupil. Mr. Gladstone had two weaknesses—for men who promised to be something, and for men who had long ceased to be anything. Lord Rosebery promised to be something, and Mr. Gladstone thought a little time well spent in making him something Gladstonian. The flattery of a great man's notice produced its due effect. Lord Rosebery conceived for Mr. Gladstone an almost filial admiration and, his ambition awakened, set out to qualify himself for maintaining the Gladstonian tradition of exact technical knowledge and high general culture. He took his seat in the House of Lords in May 1868 ; but it was not until nearly three years later that he made his first parliamentary speech. The interval was filled by a course of study more severe than men usually impose on themselves. He spent little time on the elegances, and in classical learning he never got much beyond his sixth-form acquirements ; his quotation from the old authors, though frequent, were generally commonplace. His cultural aims were mainly utilitarian. Directing his attention specially to history, biography, and political science, he was not content with the elements of these subjects. To take an example, he not only gained a knowledge of European history, recent and remote, rare among his countrymen, but devoted himself to a close study of the intricacies of Continental genealogy.

The social importance of knowing exactly who is who was expressed for all time by that great expert,

Major Pendennis. "My dear boy," he told his nephew, "you cannot begin your genealogical studies too early ; I wish to Heaven you would read in Debrett every day. Not so much the historical part (for the pedigrees, between ourselves, are many of them very fabulous, and there are few families that can show such a clear descent as our own) as the account of family alliances, and who is related to whom. I have known a man's career in life blasted by ignorance on this all-important subject. Why, only last month, at dinnner at my Lord Hobanob's, a young man who has lately been received amongst us, young Mr. Suckling (author of a work, I believe), began to speak lightly of Admiral Bowser's conduct for ratting to Ministers, in what I must own was the most audacious manner. But who do you think sate next and opposite to this Mr. Suckling ? Why—why, next to him was Lady Grampound, Bowser's daughter, and opposite him was Lord Grampound, Bowser's son-in-law. The infatuated young man went on cutting jokes at the Admiral's expense, fancying that all the world was laughing with him, and I leave you to imagine Lady Hobanob's feelings—Hobanob's ! —those of every well-bred man, as the wretched *intru* was so exposing himself. *He* will never dine again in South-street. I promise you *that*." If such knowledge were vital to the safety of an adventurer in Victorian Society, an intimate acquaintance with the ramifications of the royal, princely, and noble houses of the Continent was most desirable for a statesman who, in the old world of Europe, should aspire really to direct British foreign policy. Lord Rosebery made himself a human and humanised *Almanach de Gotha*, and when he arrived in due course at the Foreign Office old civil servants were astonished at the extent and accuracy of his information on personal matters.

All this reading was carried on unostentatiously, and few suspected that the young man who saw so much of so many worlds spent the quiet hours of the night in this secret world of books. For Lord Rosebery was the opposite of a recluse. He indulged his passion

for the turf, and with his first Ladas tried his luck in the Derby of 1869. The result was an ignominious failure, for this bearer of a name afterwards to become famous trailed in dejectedly the very last of the field. The arrival of so young an owner on the turf was hailed in some quarters as the gift of a kindly Providence ; but Lord Rosebery quickly proved the possession of a long and cool head, and offered but a poor opening for guile. It was much the same in the still exclusive Society of the day ; to its charms he was by no means indifferent, and he had all the qualifications to extract and to confer pleasure. His urbane wit was the delight of a dinner-table ; his singular facility for impromptu verse of great cleverness amused the drawing-room ; he had both taste and talent for dancing. But though he passed all the great doors open to him as of course, though he enjoyed the attentions showered on a most fascinating and eligible bachelor, and though there was constant talk both in England and in America concerning a coming engagement, he showed no disposition to abridge his freedom. He was a great theatre-goer, especially devoted to light comedy. "Reliable statistics," he said at the dinner to J. L. Toole in 1872, "have proved that no young man of my age has ever spent so much money to see Mr. Toole as I have." He laid the foundation in these years of his great reputation as a maker of speeches of occasion, and long before his parliamentary fame was established he was already noted as a most desirable acquisition for a dinner or a centenary celebration.

In short, he got as much out of the various kinds of life before his thirtieth year as one rich, highly accomplished, and avid young man could well do. Unfortunately a tendency to insomnia, which was to be the bane of his mature years, had already declared itself, and made any prolonged stay in London insupportable. To gain the double advantage of quiet and proximity to the capital, Lord Rosebery made a long search for a suitable house in the surrounding country, and finally found what he wanted near Epsom.

The Durdans, where he could "hear the wood pigeon within fifteen miles of Hyde Park," remained through life very dear to him, and his perpetual complaints of invasion of the rural quietness of Surrey by the builder, and especially of the erection of great asylums in the neighbourhood, were at once pathetic in the man and amusing in the Radical.

CHAPTER IV

SOME ROOT IDEAS

Maiden Speech—View of History—Pride in Scotland—Early Tendencies to Imperialism—The Lesser and Larger Patriotisms—The Things that did not Die.

Lord Rosebery was still in his twenty-third year when he made his first speech in the House of Lords. He had been chosen by Mr. Gladstone to second the motion for the Address at the opening of the Session of 1871. The occasion was doubly remarkable.

Mr. Gladstone, who, as Lord Morley has reminded us, almost earned Queen Victoria's resentment by his constant suggestions that she should take a more prominent part in the life of the nation, had persuaded her this year to open Parliament in person. There had been a " wave of critical feeling " over the Queen's seclusion, enough apparently to justify the Prime Minister in talking about " Republicanism of a very revolutionary form flooding in," and Gladstone's representations were so urgent that her Majesty, with some reluctance, consented to break her peaceful routine.

A quite unusual brilliancy accordingly distinguished the opening ceremony. On the other hand there lay over the antique pageantry a dark shadow ; the great war on the Continent was moving towards its final catastrophe and, apart from the possibilities of direct involvement, few thoughtful observers could avoid the sense of things strange and sinister to come. Twice Bismarck had struck, and a victim had fallen, and all had been approved and applauded by those who saw in the rapid success of the Prussian Monarchy little

but the rise of a useful counterpoise to France. But many Englishmen waited for the more resounding fall still to come with a certain anxiety not wholly unselfish ; they had seen the new Empire acclaimed with swords, and there was something in the quality of its deeds to raise many questionings concerning the wisdom of the British Government's aloofness.

In such circumstances it was not unnatural that Lord Rosebery, in breaking silence for the first time, should show some degree of nervousness. His maiden speech was like most such efforts. There was a courtly reference to the coming marriage of the Marquis of Lorne to the Princess Louise, the Queen's daughter. There were congratulations to the Government on the great legal reforms which had created a High Court of Justice suitable to the modern needs of the nation. There was, under the guise of a reference to education, an advertisement of the fervent Scotticism of the orator and of the intellectual thirst of Scotland, where " nothing was commoner than to see a peasant working six months in the year for the purpose of being able to spend the winter months at the University, barely keeping body and soul together on the pittance he had saved out of the necessaries of life." There was finally a discreet reference to the Franco-Prussian conflict. On both sides existed, Lord Rosebery said, a great disinclination for peace, and " Prussia displayed a sensitiveness amounting almost to repugnance at the least interference of the neutral Powers ; indeed, she would rather give an ell without interference than an inch with it." The chief wish of Great Britain was that " the new Empire would wield its great power in the interests of peace and civilisation," but meanwhile Lord Rosebery was good enough to assure France that our confidence in her had not been shaken by the war. In these platitudes there was nothing notable, but the handsome figure of the young Peer, shown to great advantage in the uniform of a Royal Scottish Archer, attracted favourable comment. The Governmental papers were unrestrained in their praise, and even the critical *Standard*

admitted that, if the speech was not very important for the matter, the manner was "after a fashion, very good."

A much more important proof of his rapidly expanding powers was Lord Rosebery's address in the autumn of the same year to the Edinburgh Philosophical Society. It betrays but an occasional trace of that exquisite verbal felicity which afterwards distinguished him. But it bears eloquent witness to two great qualities which were never absent from Lord Rosebery's historical work—a happy power of summary and an eye for the gallant and the picturesque. Lord Rosebery never shrank from being interesting through fear of being thought shallow. Nine years later, in his Rectorial Address to the students of Aberdeen University, he boldly challenged the doctrine that dullness—with or without accuracy—is the essential merit of any work which sets out to present a picture of the past; and manfully declared his preference for "the bold colouring of character and the grand march of events." Could history be a scientific study, he asked, since up to the sixteenth century it suffered from scarcity of evidence, and in our own times from a "suspicious amplitude of material," the years of plenty being worse than those of famine?

Taking this gloomy view, it would appear that to urge the claims of history, when we are unable to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion about personages so well known as Queen Elizabeth, or George II, or the first Napoleon, is a futile, and indeed a sarcastic, effort. I speak, of course, of single-minded search after truth. I am not thinking of those ingenious writers who love to decorate some great criminal with padded virtues, and can therefore invest their narratives with all the charm of imagination and paradox. Nor, on the other hand, do I wish to allude to that other class, the body-snatchers of history, who dig up dead reputations for malignant dissection. But however earnestly it may be pursued, historical truth is difficult to secure.

He reached the conclusion that for many purposes the accuracy of history does not signify. "We want events to guide us and characters to warn us, but we do not require in events the exact detail of a Meissonier,

nor do we insist on the proper costume being placed on the actor so long as he plays his part."

This preference for the picturesque and this dislike for the pedantic are evident in his earliest considerable address. The theme—the Union—was not picturesque nor were the characters concerned subjects for a heroic pencil ; Fletcher of Saltoun was almost the only outstanding personality among them. But such as they were, the twenty-four-year old historian limns them neatly : Hamilton, " at once passionate and irresolute, headstrong and timid—was ever man quartered by such violent steeds ? " Belhaven, a rough, fat, black, noisy man, making speeches that " savour sometimes of a schoolboy's scheme, and sometimes of the Pogrom defiance " ; the pleasing and graceful Roxburghe, the headstrong Jacobite Atholl, the treble traitor Annandale ; Stair " eloquent and able indeed, but labouring under the weight of political infamy." And throughout the sketch there glows not only the love of country but the ardour of a man who is moved by all great transactions. To the young Scottish nobleman the history of Scotland, which was for centuries " little less than a long martyrdom," is " not a cold register of dates and treaties ; it stirs the blood like a trumpet."

It was indeed when Lord Rosebery dilated on the days of Scotland's bleak and stormy independence that men felt best the deeper things that were in him. His conscious formulas were perhaps a little insufficient, but his scarcely conscious instincts were rich and gallant, and they were never better expressed than when he spoke, with an almost arrogant pride, of those things of which Scotland has best title to be proud. Sometimes this " smaller patriotism " provokes a smile, as when in this particular address he describes the Union as, on the Scottish side, " like nothing so much as a poor man marrying an heiress ; mortifying to pride at first ; irksome perhaps occasionally ; in the long run harmonious, because founded on interest ; eventually it may be moulded into love by the beauty of its offspring."

To say nothing of the coolness of view in so young a man on the subject of marriage—a disposition which lends some credit to the old story of his Eton ambition to marry an heiress—it was a little startling to find England regarded as the female element in the Union. But in truth the only salve to the pride of the Scots was that they sacrificed a narrower for a wider sovereignty. At the Union, Scotland, as Lord Rosebery said, "lost in splendour by ceasing to be a kingdom and becoming a province. Her aristocracy became place-hunters in London, the pliant tools of the Ministry of the day. She lost her legislature, and gained in exchange a few votes in an alien senate which in no one respect represented her. . . . But the loss was her gain. . . . For while she was a small, poverty-stricken kingdom her views were narrowed; communion in these her provincial days with England widened them. The Parliament and the aristocracy fretted the life out of her; when they were removed she had leisure to fatten and prosper."

The loss, however, was there as well as the gain. It is not easy to define it, but we shall perhaps be best able to grasp its nature if we note something which Lord Rosebery said, as late as 1900, in the course of his Rectorial address to the students of the University of Glasgow. He was letting his fancy wander as to what might have happened had statesmanship preserved the thirteen American colonies to the British Crown. In that case, since the growth of the Colonies would have outstripped that of the mother country, their influence would have been progressively strong in modifying the thought and institutions of the United Kingdom; the Reform Bill would have been considerably antedated; the two communities would have approximated more and more; and finally, when the Americans became the great majority, the seat of Empire "would perhaps have been moved solemnly across the Atlantic, and Britain have become the historical shrine and the European outpost of the world Empire."

What an extraordinary revolution it would have been had it been accomplished. The greatest known without bloodshed; the most

sublime transference of power in the history of mankind. Our conceptions can scarcely picture the procession across the Atlantic, the greatest sovereign in the greatest fleet in the universe, Ministers, Government, Parliament, departing for the other hemisphere, not, as in the case of the Portuguese sovereigns emigrating to Brazil, under the spur of necessity, but under the vigorous embrace of the younger world.

After making all allowances for an exuberant fancy, this is a most remarkable utterance. Our visions are often more characteristic than our sober opinions, and such a vision could not be indulged in a complacent spirit by any Englishman except, perhaps, an internationalist like Mr. H. G. Wells. But Lord Rosebery did not think as an internationalist. He thought as a Scot, schooled to be content with the "lesser patriotism" of which he so often talked, and as an Imperialist, imbued with the conviction that (as he said in an address to the Associated Societies of the University of Edinburgh in 1898) it must always be the function of Scotland to "mould the Empire." The Englishman, on the other hand, instinctively shrinks from "the vigorous embrace of the new world." Cecil Rhodes himself would not have cared to see England ruled from Cape Town, even though she were consoled by a "lesser patriotism," and many educated young Englishmen should find official places in South Africa.

There is another example of this frame of mind in the address to the Social Science Congress at Glasgow in 1874—an address remarkable rather for the skill with which an enormous number of topics were brought into relation, than for any deep thought on any of them. Lord Rosebery, talking of the necessity of rearing an educated and healthy race, pointed out that every year a population as large as that of Birmingham left British shores for the outer world.

"Will," he asked, "this great stream pass from us a torpid flood, composed of emigrants like some we now send forth, who shake the dust from their feet and swear undying enmity to us, or shall it be a broad and beneficent river of life, fertilising as the Nile, beloved as the Ganges, sacred as the Jordan, separated from us

indeed by the ocean, but like that fabled fountain Arethuse which, passing under the sea from Greece into Sicily, retained its original source in Arcadia? We do not know what our fate may be; we have no right, perhaps, to hope that we may be an exception to the rule by which nations have their period of growth, and of grandeur, and of decay. It may be that all we most esteem shall fade away like the glories of Babylon. But if we have done our duty well, even though our history should pass away, and our country become

> . . . . An island salt and bare,
> The haunt of seals, and orcs, and sea-mew's clang,

she may be remembered not ungratefully as the affluent mother of giant Commonwealths and peaceful Empires that shall perpetuate the best qualities of the race."

We have here a symptom of that disease which seems to afflict the man who, while full of racial pride, can only feel nationality in terms of Empire. The "lesser patriotism" is not quite a substitute for patriotism without adjective. It is the difference between "till death us do part" and "while circumstances permit." For everything there is exacted a price, and the penalty of Empire is very much like the penalty of polygamy—even the favourite wife is not quite like the one wife. There may be immense gains in merging a small country into a great system, but there is some loss, and we can estimate Scotland's loss by a moment's reflection on the spiritual change which has come over England herself since she became the centre of a vast Empire. The England of the Shakespearian rhapsody was the "teeming womb" of royal kings, who went as far as "the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry," and did great deeds there, but did not stay to found "giant Commonwealths" and "peaceful Empires." "These her princes" did come home again, sometimes in victory, sometimes in defeat; it never struck them that their future lay across the water, or that it might pay better to rule imperfectly a large black population than to rule effectively a small white population.

The small State, given the capacity to maintain itself securely, has the great advantage of being able to know its mind and speak its mind ; it can be broad in its views because of the very narrowness of its territory. Every enlargement of interest implies a contraction of intellectual freedom. Athens was great because she was little. Elizabethan England was "spacious" because she was circumscribed. Plato was not troubled by public opinion in Egypt or Etruria. Shakespeare, so long as he said nothing about Elizabeth or Cecil, could say what he liked about most other things. He could paint a Jew without being accused of anti-Semitism. He could speak of "chasing those pagans in those holy fields" without thought of the Agha Khan and the responsibilities of England as the head of a Moslem Empire. It was not necessary, when any responsible person wished to do a Christian thing, to consider whether Mohammedans, or Hindus, or fire-worshippers, wholly approved. When Amurath an Amurath succeeded it was not obligatory on Cecil or Walsingham to congratulate an historic ally on its unvarying luck in the matter of humane and progressive princes. In other words England was England, and could be English. It was not Britain, or an item in "the association of self-governing nations known as the British Empire." Its poets were English poets, not laureates of Empire ; its Churchmen, instead of studying sympathetically the beauties of Buddhism or Islam, plainly called the non-Christian world heathen ; its statesmen had not yet to consider nicely whether a Cape negro ought to be called an Afro-Briton or a Hong-kong Chinaman a Britasian.

Above all nobody in that time ever thought of a natural law by which nations have their period of growth, and of grandeur, and of decay. England might be beaten by the Spaniard as she had been by the Norman, and that was a possibility so unpleasant that every nobleman of the day thought it worth while learning how to fence. But no nobleman of the day ever conceived of an England deserted and given

over to wild beasts and wild fowl. Why should he? It was not an island "salt and bare," but one extraordinarily fit for producing all sorts of things, including the best kind of men and women. It had never struck him, ignorant as he was of the first rudiments of political economy, that it might some day not "pay" to cultivate the soil, or that the interests of cosmopolitan usury should ever be paramount to those of English flesh and blood. He still thought sometimes of conquering France when he should have time for that considerable job. But he could never have entertained, even after an intolerable deal of sack, the vision of a "sublime transference of power" to France as a country more populous than England, less foggy, and better adapted for money-making.

Nevertheless Lord Rosebery's "lesser patriotism" was no ignoble thing, and his "larger patriotism" was a much saner thing than some of his rhetoric might imply. He did love Scotland for the things most worthy in the Scottish character—its honesty, manliness, tenacity, intellectual curiosity, romanticism. He did love the Empire not only because it was big, but because it was beneficent—"the greatest secular agency for good that the world has seen" is on the whole a just enough description, for if England has suffered in some ways from being the head of an Empire, the Empire has derived almost unmixed benefit from England. Finally, it is a mark of his mind that it tended always to lay emphasis on the white rather than the black or yellow side of the Empire—that is to say, on the most permanent and splendid, as against the more transitory and doubtful results of British colonising effort. More than once he placed stress on the need of a change in our outlook; a foreign policy which once looked mainly to India must in future look increasingly to the white Dominions. He seems to have felt that, whatever mercantile profit may follow Imperial effort in climates unfitted to sustain the full vigour and productiveness of Europeans, the gains in a deeper sense are at best dubious, tending to exhaust

the force by which alone they can be guaranteed, and conferring no genuine increase of physical or spiritual power ; whereas every acre of white man's country that is settled by Britons implies an addition for ever to the might of a great race, whether or no it should contribute permanently to the solidity of a particular political combination.

These two patriotisms, the lesser patriotism of the Scot and the wider patriotism of the Imperialist, were fundamental passions, and endured throughout the changes of his life. Less firmly rooted was his interest in "social reform." At one time he was little short of a Socialist without knowing it, and at no time was he the genuine *laissez-faire* Liberal. He believed in the State "doing things," which is Socialism when it is not Toryism, whereas the essence of Liberalism is (once having gained conditions favourable to the free play of forces) to leave alone everything that can be left alone. "Come down and do something for the people," he said at St. James's Hall when he became Premier and, during the whole of his early life, he was anxious to "do something," though perhaps he was not very clear what it was to be.

Apart from his genuine and permanent interest in education, these enthusiasms faded as he got older. The things which did not fade were his love of Scotland and his passion for the Empire.

CHAPTER V

MARRIAGE, MIDLOTHIAN, AND FIRST MINISTRY

Early Parliamentary Interests—A Critic of Disraeli—Crosses Swords with Salisbury—Faith in Gladstone's Return—Marriage to Miss Hannah Rothschild—Increased Political Prestige—The Midlothian Campaign—Claims on Party Gratitude—His Dissatisfaction over Minor Office—Resignation—Visit to Australia—Its Effects on his Liberalism.

It has seemed more profitable to analyse the more significant influences which were early at work in Lord Rosebery's mind than to give a catalogue of the public appearances made by him during these formative years. While Mr. Gladstone's greatest administration lasted the House of Lords saw little of Lord Rosebery, and when he attended the debates, in the intervals of travel, sport, and private study, it was rather as a spectator than a talker. Such contributions as he made to the deliberations of the Peers were rare, they were far from important, and their only interest to-day is that they occasionally illustrate the bent of the young Peer's tastes and mental tendencies.

He betrays, naturally, a strong interest in Scotland, and especially in matters affecting the Scottish Church. He reveals thus early his discontent with the constitution of the House on Lords. He lets no opportunity pass of speaking of foreign affairs. He utters, under the plea of a motion for the appointment of a Royal Commission on the supply of horses, a semi-humorous apologia for his favourite pastime. Racing, he claims, is an innocent and democratic amusement. Hunting and shooting are only for the wealthy, but there is none so poor that he could not visit a race-course. He commits himself

to the optimistic view that gambling is on the decline, and for the rest declares that "as for putting down gambling by abolishing races they might just as well think they could abolish rain by suppressing the gutters." The state of the extradition treaties, the administration of Heligoland, the Alabama claims, are among his interests ; and on foreign, as well as domestic questions, he is the ordinary advanced Liberal of the day.

With the accession to power of Mr. Disraeli we are conscious of a somewhat stronger interest and more consistent self-assertion. There was, indeed, in the state of the Liberal Party much inducement for a young politician to attempt to make his mark in opposition. The great combination which had made history on so large a scale since 1868 had been wrecked as by an earthquake. Mr. Gladstone had gone into retirement ; Lord Hartington had reluctantly assumed the thankless cares and burdens of a titular leadership ; one Whig's hand was against another, and every Radical's hand was against all Whigs. Here, if at all, was the opportunity of a talented young patrician to win for himself a position beyond his years and experience, and Lord Rosebery was not slow to see and use the opening. Taking his cue from Mr. Gladstone, he criticised Ministers on much the lines that statesman would have adopted had he been less busy with the Pope and Professor Huxley, and with such effect that Disraeli speaks of him, as early as 1876, as "beginning to interest the House." The old statesman may be imagined as watching with sympathetic cynicism the attacks on his Government made by one who showed in private a full appreciation of his kindliness to young politicians of any school. We have a note in one of Disraeli's letters on the Rosebery of this time : "Talked very well—just come from America—his third visit, and full as an egg of fine and quaint observation."[1]

Lord Rosebery strongly opposed the Bill giving the Queen the title of Empress of India, on the ground that, far from adding to the lustre of the Crown, it

[1] *Life of Disraeli* (Buckle and Moneypenny).

was really derogatory in its effect ; " in touching the outward form of the Monarchy they in some sort touched its inward spirit and dignity." On the Eastern questions which quickly assumed acuteness he became a pertinacious and rather bitter critic. He protested against the secrecy and theatricality of Disraelian methods, and the respect which his expanding abilities inspired was well expressed in a graceful rebuke by Lord Salisbury. Lord Rosebery had denounced the Schouvaloff secret treaty which settled in advance the main decisions of the Berlin Conference in 1878. " If," he said, " this country was to be left in total ignorance of such matters, Parliament had better abdicate its functions and act as a registration office for registering the decrees of the Foreign Office." Lord Salisbury replied that the speech illustrated a " total unacquaintance with the inside of a Government office, which in the noble Earl's case will, I have no doubt, not last long." There was insight in the criticism. Lord Rosebery's enthusiasm for " open diplomacy " did not survive his first experience of power, and no Foreign Minister was less inclined to take the world into his confidence as to the details of negotiation.

After Disraeli's return from Berlin, bearing " Peace with Honour," Lord Rosebery, in a speech at Aberdeen which was the most important he had so far delivered, made a general attack on the whole Near Eastern policy of the Government. Its ostensible aim, he said, was the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire. How had that policy been served at the Berlin Conference ?

> What have the Government done ? They have partitioned Turkey : they have secured a doubtful fragment of the spoil for themselves (Cyprus); they have incurred responsibilities of a vast and unknown kind which no British Government had a right to incur without consulting the British Parliament and British people. As to the partitioning of the Turkish Empire, that is a result which some of us may not be particularly inclined to regret. But it is strange to find a Government that made the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire their watchword coming back triumphantly from the Congress where that Empire was partitioned among five or six Powers. . . . At Berlin the Powers meted out the territory

of Turkey, or what portions of it were desired, to four or five Powers that asked for portions of it. But another Power was engaged behind the back of the plenipotentiaries in securing a portion for herself. That Power, I blush to say, was Great Britain. No defeat in battle could have been so prejudicial to our prestige as the acquisition of Cyprus in the way it was got. . . . We have gained an unhealthy island of which he had enough; but we have lost in exchange that of which we cannot have too much, the sympathy and respect of surrounding nations."

Turkey, Lord Rosebery proceeded, was not a Great Power, but only a great impotence, and he asked whether as taxpayers we could afford the money, and as men the blood, to protect Turkish rule in Asia:

We are told that it is not a matter of choice, that it is necessary for the preservation of India. Sir, I believe it is no more necessary for the preservation of India than it is necessary that we should damage Spain in order that we should keep Gibraltar. But I do say this, that one may pay even too great a price for the preservation of India.

This speech, and especially the reference to "too great a price for India," would have come rather strangely from the Rosebery of twenty years later. It went considerably beyond the rather fumbling and ineffective criticisms of the official Opposition leaders, and might not have been inappropriate to Mr. Gladstone himself. It was in fact Gladstonian in its inspiration. Lord Rosebery had not made the mistake of many more experienced politicians and even of Sir William Harcourt himself. He was not deceived by Mr. Gladstone's absorption in Homeric prolegomena and theological polemics. Mr. Gladstone might profess himself out of harmony with the ideas and the temper of the day, might declare that "his prospective work was not parliamentary," might enlarge rapturously on what might be done with the pen, especially on the "great subject of belief." But the fact remained that he was still well under seventy, that he possessed a matchless constitution, and was tortured with a fever for action. Whoever else might be blind, Lord Rosebery clearly foresaw that only a sufficient occasion was needed to concentrate once more the energies which were being stimulated rather than exhausted in what might be

tasks for lesser men, but were only amusements for Mr. Gladstone.

The Bulgarian atrocities, inspiring Gladstone's terrific invective against the Turk, "the one great anti-human specimen of humanity," provided the needed temptation. Gladstone readily reconciled his dislike of Disraeli, who had thrown his cloak over the Turk, with his sympathy for the Bulgarians, whom the Turk oppressed. But the Disraelian spell was not easily broken. From the first a large part of the country was with Gladstone in his demand that Turkish power should be extinguished in Bulgaria, and "that the Turks should carry away their abuses by carrying off themselves, that their Zaptiehs and their Mudirs, their Bimbashis and their Zusbashis, their Kaimakams and their Pashas, one and all, bag and baggage, should clear out from the province they had desolated and profaned." But the very violence of the great Liberal generated a corresponding violence on the other side ; a majority probably of the Liberal Party remained unconvinced ; and for many months Mr. Gladstone had to face vehement unpopularity without the consolation of an equally firm support. In such circumstances Lord Rosebery's adhesion attained something like a monopoly value. His abilities were evident, and even had they been smaller Mr. Gladstone, with his usual kindness for clever young aristocrats, must already have marked him for future promotion. But the occasion would probably have been deferred but for Lord Rosebery's perspicacity in inferring from the first the inevitable return of the one great man in the Liberal Party.

Lord Rosebery's marriage was a scarcely less decisive factor in the establishment of a political position which neither his experience nor his industry would otherwise have justified at this early stage. For some years rumour had been busy with his name in a matrimonial context. Now he was spoken of as likely to marry a rich American ; at another time there were whispers of a royal alliance. On January 5, 1878, speculation

was set at rest by the definite announcement of his approaching marriage with Miss Hannah Rothschild, only daughter of Baron Mayer de Rothschild ; and the wedding took place, in the presence of a great press of notabilities, on Monday, March 20th. There were several precedents for the union of a British nobleman with a daughter of the great Jewish house. A sister of Baron Lionel de Rothschild had found a husband in the Hon. Henry Fitzroy, brother of the Earl of Southampton of that day, and the two daughters of Sir Anthony de Rothschild had married, the one Mr. Eliot Yorke, and the other Mr. Cyril Flower, afterwards Lord Battersea. But strict Jews looked on such marriages with disapproval, and the *Jewish Chronicle* characterised the Rosebery match as a " lamentable occurrence," to be bewailed in sackcloth. " We mourn, we deplore this degeneracy," it said, " and we pray to God fervently to spare the community a similar grief."

No Christian pen or tongue imitated these laments ; the marriage was quite in the liberal spirit of the time, and even the usually censorious *Truth* gave its benediction. Indeed, some of the congratulations were, to present taste, exaggerated in their floridity. For example, Lord Young, proposing the health of the young Earl and Countess at a great dinner at Dalmeny on the occasion of their home-coming, spoke of a recent visit he had paid to the bride's beautiful home at Mentmore. " You have all heard," he said, " of the magnificence of Mentmore, and you may receive my testimony that on this occasion report has not exaggerated ; but pray receive my testimony with this addition : that the splendours of Lady Rosebery's home, like the setting of a jewel, however rich and rare and beautiful the setting, paled before the lustre of the gem within, and were subdued even to my unaccustomed eyes by the charm of the gentle manners, of the noble mind, and of the graceful and winning kindness through which the heart must spring kindly back." Lord Rosebery himself was briefer, happier, and less hyberbolical.

"You have this afternoon," he said, "conferred a nationality. My wife, as you know, is a Jewess by race, an Englishwoman by birth, and to-day, by adoption, you have made her a Scotswoman."

Lord Rosebery's political prestige was enormously increased by this fortunate connection with the wealthiest and probably the most influential family in the world. Money had not then, perhaps, quite the same direct power in politics that it possessed half a century before, or that it possessed half a century afterwards. But its significance was sufficient to change the whole aspect of Lord Rosebery's circumstances. As a Primrose he was merely one among many moderately rich and socially distinguished young men ; as himself he was simply a promising but untested politician ; as the husband of a Rothschild he at once passed to that small and favoured circle in which Governments are made and policies framed. His wife became a great Liberal hostess ; his house—or rather Lansdowne House, which he took for some years—became a social head-quarters of Liberalism ; he himself, from being a figure of interest and promise, passed without interval to the status of a Party magnate. An indication of this increased position was almost immediately forthcoming. In the autumn of 1878 Lord Rosebery was chosen as Liberal candidate for the Lord Rectorship of Aberdeen University, defeating Mr. Cross, the Conservative nominee, by three votes. This victory, won by a youth over an experienced politician old enough to be his grandfather, was widely interpreted as an omen of the approaching fall of Mr. Disraeli.

It was this enlarged and established Lord Rosebery who took the foremost part in inviting Mr. Gladstone to contest Midlothian, and the famous Midlothian campaigns were directed from Dalmeny. They are said to have cost Lord Rosebery sixty thousand pounds ; but the money was not lavished without return ; it established for him a claim on any future Liberal Government which it would be impossible to ignore. There were two aspects to this famous effort. Locally

it was a contest between the Buccleuch and the Primrose interests. The sitting member was Lord Dalkeith, the heir of the Duke of Buccleuch, and in ordinary circumstances even the magic of Mr. Gladstone's personality, backed by the political weight of Dalmeny, would have been powerless to contend against the influence of the great ducal House, exercised over the narrow constituency of the day. The Rothschild marriage, however, had done much to equalise the odds, and to justify Lord Rosebery's hope of winning Midlothian as a political appanage of his house. Nationally considered, the Midlothian campaign was one vast manifesto against Disraelian Imperialism and all its works.

Mr. Gladstone arrived at Edinburgh from Liverpool late on the night of November 24, 1879. The journey north had been punctuated by receptions and speeches at stopping-places, and is best described in Lord Rosebery's own words in introducing his leader to an Edinburgh audience :

> From his home in Wales to the metropolis of Scotland there has been no village too small to afford a crowd to see him, no cottager so humble that he could not find a light to put in his window as he passed. Mothers have brought their babes to lisp a welcome, old men have crept forth from their homes to see him before they died.

It might be added, in less elevated vein, that the hero arrived at Waverley Station almost like a commercial traveller in the woollen trade, so loaded was he with every description of shawl, plaid, and rug. In the course of a little over a fortnight, Mr. Gladstone spoke over eighty thousand words, and the fluent stream was denounced by enemies as a danger to the Commonwealth. That it was a danger to the Administration was proved a few months later. Lord Beaconsfield, misled by the by-election victory of Sir Edward Clarke, dissolved in the expectation of a triumph at the polls. Mr. Gladstone at once entered on his second Midlothian campaign. Lord Rosebery, though only just recovered from scarlet fever, hurried to Scotland to act again as

his host and, while debarred by his position as a Peer from taking a direct part in the election, delivered a speech at Glasgow in which he denounced the foreign policy of the Government, and gave his own watch-word: "The cause of England, peace, and freedom throughout the world."

"When I say peace," he said, "I do not mean peace at any price. When I say freedom, I do not mean license. When I say England I mean not only these two islands: I mean the great Empire throughout the world, of which we are as proud as any Tory Party can possibly be,—which we will maintain with our blood if necessary, but which we will not recklessly increase at the cost of the people of England." He incidentally apologised for Lady Rosebery, who, he remarked, was "a little apt to go beyond the rules prescribed for the inanimate nature of Peers in her sympathy with the Liberal Party," not that she did anything wrong, but that she could not conceal her enthusiasm.

The Midlothian election was won by a majority of 211. Mr. Gladstone showed himself sufficiently grateful to Lord Rosebery both as host and lieutenant. "I will not trouble you with mere words of thanks," he wrote, "I feel them so poor and idle." But he testified to his sense of "the inexpressible aid and comfort derived day by day from your considerate and ever-watchful care and tact." Nor was such acknowledgment disproportionate to the service. Lord and Lady Rosebery had approved themselves model host and hostess. It was not only that every device that ingenuity could conceive or money afford was employed to promote the physical comfort of the revered guest. Lord Rosebery even sacrificed his ancestral elms and oaks to the destructive axe which had thinned the trees of Hawarden and, to adapt Lord Randolph's immortal phrase, the woods of Dalmeny groaned in order that Mr. Gladstone should perspire. Mr. Gladstone made amends for the fallen giants by planting a row of sycamores; patted the first Rosebery baby, named Sybil after the heroine of Disraeli's novel; and carried away

with him a profound conviction that he had found a future leader for Liberalism.

In such circumstances it was a surprise to the public that the Lord of Dalmeny found no place in the new administration. Lord Rosebery had declared, as soon as the returns had established the certainty of a large Liberal majority, that there would be " no real gladness if any other leader but Mr. Gladstone were given them." To the chagrin of the Queen, and perhaps others, no other leader was found possible, and Mr. Gladstone kissed hands as Prime Minister. In view of his obligations to Lord Rosebery the offer of some kind of place was inevitable, but with " rare modesty " (as *The Times* put it), Lord Rosebery declined, on the ground of inexperience, to join the Government. It would, however, be a mistake to picture him as suggesting, with a cough of deprecation, that he was unequal to the responsibilities thrust on the mediocrity whom he afterwards displaced. Lord Rosebery was perfectly aware of his abilities, and not at all disposed to mortify his young ambition. His real reason for delay was prudential ; he believed, having regard to his part in the Midlothian campaign, that acceptance of office at this time might be misconstrued to his prejudice. He could well afford to wait, what with his strong position in Scotland, and the great influence which the Rothschild alliance had gained him in the inner circle of Society. He therefore made himself as little conspicuous as possible during the first session of the new Parliament. Such self-effacement, however, is one thing ; satisfaction that others acquiesce in it is quite another. People who are the most particular to take the lowest seat in the synagogue are often the most annoyed if they are not invited to go up higher ; and there is little doubt that, after a respectable interval, Lord Rosebery watched with some feeling Mr. Gladstone's oblivion to his claims. A certain Lord Carlingford was appointed Lord Privy Seal. Lord Rosebery did not want the job—at least so he intimated—but he felt it would have been

only graceful to consult him as to the filling of it. Sir William Harcourt, who seems to have been extremely anxious to placate the young nobleman, recognising how great a hold he already possessed on Scotland, called the Prime Minister's attention, time and time again, to the trouble. Lord Rosebery's annoyance, he said, was very strong, and his vexation very deep. There are frequent references to the matter in Mr. Gardiner's *Life*. They make it quite clear that Lord Rosebery was extremely dissatisfied. Mr. Gladstone, busy and disinclined to be hurried in such matters, for some time disregarded Harcourt's advice that he should administer a much-needed anodyne ; but repeated representations had their effect, and in the late summer of 1881 Lord Rosebery joined the Ministry in the capacity of Under-Secretary for Home Affairs. He had some little time before supported a proposal of the Earl (afterwards Duke) of Fife in favour of the appointment of a Minister for Scotland. The plan was put aside for a time, but Lord Rosebery, who had taken part in the "great battle on behalf of Scottish administration," believing that "where there is a vigorous and a loyal nationality it is not wise to suppress or to ignore that nationality, and the better policy is to satisfy its just aspirations," conceived that, by virtue of his special knowledge, he could, by going to the Home Office, become a useful "backstairs Minister for Scotland."

Such expectations were not fulfilled ; the work turned out to be ill suited to the Minister, and the Minister not much better suited to the work ; and in June 1883, a minor sensation was caused by Lord Rosebery's retirement. His official chief was Sir William Harcourt, and in the light of subsequent events there was a tendency to suggest personal incompatibility as the explanation of this retirement, despite Sir William's evidently sincere declaration at the time that the relations between him and his subordinate had been distinguished by personal affection, "never disturbed for a single moment." A silly story was even told

to the effect that Harcourt was offended by finding on Lord Rosebery's desk a caricature of himself, as "Jumbo," a then famous elephant, executed by a Civil Service amateur. The immediate reason, Lord Rosebery's resentment at the criticism that a Peer Under-Secretary was not amenable to House of Commons opinion, was the subject of a reference by himself many years later.

"It was found," he said, "that that office was a dangerous one to be entrusted to a Peer, and under stress of public opinion, overwhelming, as I understood, on the subject, I had to relinquish it. It was then that I made a solemn determination that I would never relinquish another office on that objection." Doubtless there was a certain amount of personal feeling behind these criticisms ; many Liberals were not a little jealous of the influence the young Scottish Peer had established over Mr. Gladstone. But there was also real inconvenience in having the Home Office Under-Secretary in the Upper House, and it was generally known that the arrangement had not worked well. It was most characteristic of Lord Rosebery throughout his career to show impatience of any kind of criticism. There was, however, more behind his resignation than mere sensitiveness to House of Commons feeling. The job was one which did not correspond to his estimate of his own capacities, and which, while adding to his responsibilities to Scotsmen, did little to add to his prestige among them. That something like an ultimatum had been presented to the head of the Government is almost certain. For a time Mr. Gladstone managed to soothe the young man's hurt pride, but the sense of grievance remained and rankled ; and the incident of the Home Office debate in which his position was attacked was only the last of a long succession of troubles. He left office, in short, chiefly because he was of opinion that his merits had not been sufficiently recognised.

Meanwhile his election as Lord Rector of Edinburgh University had marked his increasing hold on the general imagination and especially on Scottish intellectualism.

His address, delivered in November 1882, testifies to a ripening of his style. An example of his verbal felicity is the analysis of the word patriotism :

There is no word so prostituted as patriotism. Every Government fails in it, and every Opposition glows with it. It dictates silence and speech, action and inaction, interference and abstention, with unvarying force and facility. It smiles impartially on the acceptance and resignation of office; it impels people to enter and to quit public life with equal reason and equal precipitation. It urges to heroism, to self-sacrifice, to assassination, and to incendiarism. It rebuilt Jerusalem and burned Moscow. It stabbed Marat and put his bones in the Pantheon. It was the watchword of the Reign of Terror and the motto of the guillotine. It raises statues to the people whom it lodges in dungeons. It patronises almost every crime and every virtue in history.

With England, he said, the love of Great Britain meant the love of England—the larger and the lesser patriotisms were one. But it was an advantage that national types, when self-sufficing, should not blend.

A great Empire like the British should be a sheet knit at the four corners, containing all manner of men, fitted for their separate climates and work and spheres of action, but honouring the common vessel which contains them; not like that massive glacier-mill, the Roman State, which rounded off the resisting bodies within it to one monotonous form, while it crushed and annihilated the weaker.

He urged the Scot to be capable and reliable, so that he should serve as a standing advertisement to his race. Scotland seemed to supply the world with gardeners, and that association with a pleasant art had done much to lessen prejudice against the country. In other directions every Scot could by his merit enhance the reputation of the stock. A characteristic passage revealed an affection for the past overpowered by a slightly mournful acquiescence in the present :

Your old draperies, your old tapestries, your old banners are clutched by the greedy century, and carded and thrown into the mill, that they may emerge damp sheets for your newspapers; and it is well. Your old bones are pulverised that they may dress the pastures; and it is well. Your abbeys and your castles are quarries for dykes, and prize bothies and locomotive sheds; and it is well. Your clan emigrates to Glasgow or to Canada, the glen is silent save for the footfall of the deer; and

it is well. You scale the dark brow of the mighty Helvellyn, and you find a personally conducted tourist drinking bottled beer on the summit; and it is well also. The effigies and splendours of tradition are not meant to cramp the energies or the development of a vigorous and various nation. They are not meant to hold in mortmain the proper territory of human intelligence and righteous aspiration. . . . For all that, however, these very annals and the characters they inspire and describe are our intangible property; they constitute an inheritance we are not willing to see either squandered or demolished, for they are the title-deeds and heirlooms of our national existence.

Incidentally we find a witty figure: "Vanity is a centipede with corns on every foot," and the final conclusion is:

What we need is not the passive recollection of the past, though the past should never be forgotten; it is not the mere utterance of time-honoured shibboleths, though we need not disdain these either; it is not the constituting the plaid a wedding garment without which none is welcome, though we may love the tartan well enough. . . . The dream of him who loved Scotland best would lie not so much in the direction of antiquarian revival as in the hope that his country might be pointed out as one that, in spite of rocks and rigour and poverty, could yet teach the world by precept and example, could lead the van and point the moral, where greater nations and fairer states had failed.

Free from the ties of office, Lord Rosebery spent a considerable period in travel. Already he had made himself well acquainted with Europe, Canada, and the United States, but the tour in which he now (December 1883) sought to dissipate the chagrin of his first official disappointment was of a much more ambitious design. He had now four children, Lady Sybil Myra Caroline, born September 18, 1879; Lady Hannah Margaret Etrenno (Peggy) born January 1, 1881; Albert Edward Meyer Rothschild, Lord Dalmeny, born January 8, 1882 (one of his godfathers being the Prince of Wales); Neil James Archibald, born December 14, 1882. The cares of the nursery were devolved on the children's aunt, Lady Leconfield, and Lord and Lady Rosebery sailed for Australia by way of America. An orator whose fame was already more than insular could not escape much speech-making, and he soon established in Australia a fame to which,

perhaps, his title and his youthful good looks contributed not less than his power of expression.

At Melbourne he claimed for the Scotch that they had "the greatest thirst for knowledge of any nation." "The connection between Great Britain and her colonies," he said, "is either a marriage of affection or it is nothing at all." It had been said that if Australia became a Dominion like Canada there would be danger of separation; one visitor had said the connection would not survive a war. He believed it would become closer and not looser than before. "Since my visit to Australia," he added, "it will become a passion with me to endeavour to preserve that union." He complied with the request of the widow of Marcus Clarke, author of *His Natural Life*, to allow the memorial volume to that writer to be dedicated to him. "Long ago," he wrote, in a singularly graceful letter, "I fell upon *His Natural Life*, and read it, not once or twice, but many times, at different periods. . . . There can be, I think, no two opinions as to the horrible fascination of the book. . . . To me, I confess, it is the most terrible of all novels, more terrible than Oliver Twist or Victor Hugo's more startling effects, for the simple reason that it is more real. It has all the solemn ghastliness of the truth. . . . It is rare, I think, that so young a country has produced so great a literary force. I cannot believe but that the time must come when Australians will feel a melancholy pride in this true son of genius, and Australian genius." [1]

This tour, which was extended to India, must be regarded as one of the landmarks of Lord Rosebery's political life. He was pleased with the Australians; to them his democratic professions and his love of sport alike appealed; he was profoundly impressed, as all who visit the oversea dominions must be, with their large present and their almost infinite possibilities of development; he acquired a personal stake in the welfare of the future Commonwealth in the shape of an investment in real estate; and from this time the

[1] In fact, Marcus Clarke was a born Englishman.

interest he had always felt in the Empire began to assume the proportions of a passion. And that it was, with all the qualifications already noted, a passion of the noblest kind, must be conceded by all who have read that fine passage in the address delivered many years later (November 1900), as Lord Rector, to the students of the University of Glasgow:

> How marvellous it all is! Built not by saints and angels, but the work of men's hands; cemented with men's honest blood and with a world of tears, welded by the best brains of centuries past; not without the taint and reproach incidental to all human work, but constructed on the whole with pure and splendid purpose. Human, and yet not wholly human, for the most heedless and the most cynical must see the finger of the divine. Growing as trees while others slept; fed by the faults of others as well as by the character of our fathers; reaching with the ripple of a resistless tide over tracts and islands and continents, until our little Britain woke up to find herself the foster-mother of nations and the source of united empires. Do we not hail in this less the energy and fortune of a race than the supreme direction of the Almighty? Shall we not, while we adore the blessing, acknowledge the responsibility? And while we see, far away in the rich horizons, growing generations fulfilling the promise, do we not own with resolution mingled with awe the honourable duty incumbent on ourselves? Shall we then falter and fail? The answer is not doubtful. We will rather pray that strength may be given us, adequate and abundant to shrink from no sacrifice in the fulfilment of our mission; that we may be true to the high traditions of our forefathers; and that we may transmit their bequest to our children, aye, and please God, to their remote descendants, enriched and undefiled, this blessed and splendid dominion.

Before his visit to Australia, Lord Rosebery might be described as a Gladstonian with somewhat rebellious tendencies; full of pious regard for his illustrious chief, but a little impatient with the Gladstonian absorption in merely political reform, a little irritated by the typically Liberal attitude to the outer English world. After his visit to Australia we find him, except on the personal side, much less of a Gladstonian, perhaps something less of a Liberal, very decidedly more of an Imperialist.

CHAPTER VI

A SINKING SHIP

The Franchise Problem—Attack on the Lords—Their Resentment—An Imperialistic Note—Rejoins Ministry—A "New and Fresh Force"—Heightened Prestige.

IT WAS an agitated Britain to which Lord Rosebery returned. The country was in the throes of the political crisis produced by Mr. Gladstone's great Franchise Bill extending the vote to the agricultural labourer. The House of Lords had taken up the position that the Bill could not be passed unless accompanied by a redistribution of seats, and the air was thick with threats and counter-threats.

Lord Rosebery was in time to speak at length in favour of the second reading. He transfixed with a blast of satire the Duke of Argyll, who had "made a spirited defence of the country Peers, and drew a picture of them studying politics in their rural retreats, and when the tocsin sounded, hurrying from these rustic retreats, redolent of the library and the hayfield, ready to confirm any decision which might be arrived at by the Front Bench opposite." This picture he proceeded to shatter.

It does not matter so much what *we* think of the country Peers. What we have to consider is what is the opinion outside as to the character of these votes? And when you analyse the large majority and find it is composed of those who have not habitually attended this House, is that a weapon with which you can with any confidence enter into a conflict with the great majority of the country or of the House of Commons? . . . You cannot prevent this Bill passing. You cannot even turn out the Government. If anything is certain it is that by this action you will greatly strengthen the Government. Whatever misfortunes or mistakes they may have had you pass a wet sponge over the slate. . . . There will be an agitation of a violent and terrible kind. I am not speaking

in the language of menace; I am only predicting absolutely certain results from which I myself recoil. . . . You are placing this House, this ancient institution, in a position for which it is most unsuited; I mean the risky position of trying to dam a torrent of popular feeling. You may have a thing which is valuable of itself, but you may put it to a very bad use. A connoisseur paid £4000 the other day for an ancient, elaborate, costly horn. That would be a very bad instrument for poking the fire with. But that is precisely what you are about to do on this occasion. You are using an institution of the most ancient and valuable kind to poke up a conflagration of which I, for one, cannot pretend to see the limits. . . . I would ask you in the interest of your order, of your authority, and of your Party, to pause before you pass a resolution which may strike a fatal blow at your existence.

The House, despite this eloquence, or perhaps partly because of it, rejected the Bill by 351 votes to 59. Mr. Gladstone's reply was another Midlothian campaign, with Lord Rosebery playing his old part as host, and a compromise was eventually arranged, a Redistribution Bill being agreed on.

Lord Rosebery had meanwhile brought forward, as his own contribution to the common stock of ideas, one of his numerous schemes for the reform of the Chamber to which it irked him to belong. He moved for a Select Committee to inquire into and report on the whole question. Complaining that the existing House represented only the Church, the Law, and the hereditary principle, he urged that it should represent also medicine, art, science, literature, commerce, and even labour; and that the Colonies should send their delegates.

Whatever may be thought of the merits of such a scheme—and it has so far passed the wit of statesmen to frame a satisfactory substitute for the House of Lords without completely departing from its character—there can be only one view of the impolicy of the action of the young Scottish Lord in urging it on his fellow Peers.

In no case was the Upper Chamber of that day, so far unconquered in any of its numerous contests with what was alleged to be the popular will, likely to accept such an adulteration of its quality. But there was

something almost grotesque in its being invited so to transform itself by a politician still in his thirties, who had not yet held anything but a quite subordinate office. Nor unnaturally this audacity was strongly resented. It was acutely said by the late Mr. S. H. Jeyes, that Lord Rosebery suffered rather conspicuously from a common mistake of men conscious of cleverness ; he fatally exaggerated the inferiority of second-rate persons. " It is a dangerous challenge to declare war on dullards, and Lord Rosebery has been pursued by them—on both sides—ever since he became prominent in public life." It was no doubt high-spirited in a young man of fashion, sharing most of the tastes and some of the foibles of the people he condemned, to charge the majority of his fellow lords with unfitness for their functions. But in doing so Lord Rosebery, while perhaps a little unjust to the Lords, was most unkind to himself. Mediocrity has always a talent for avenging itself on its insulters, and to its natural jealousy and distrust of brilliance it adds, for the discomfiture of those who fail to conceal that contempt, a malice that knows no fatigue and a vigilance that never fails.

Notwithstanding Lord Rosebery's strenuous support of the Government over the Franchise Question, and his filial tenderness for Mr. Gladstone at Dalmeny, we are conscious at this time of a certain restiveness on Imperial matters. There was some significance in the emphasis with which he impressed on the Trade Union Congress in the autumn of 1884, the importance of Imperial federation ; the Empire, he said, must either grow stronger or weaker, it could not continue to exist in its present somewhat indefinite form, and the working-classes who mainly peopled our Colonial Empire should place this subject in their programme for early and serious consideration.

If this suggested a growing impatience with purely domestic pre-occupations, a still more definitely Imperialistic note was discernible in his speech to the Liverpool Reform Club a little later. He then insisted on the necessity for a stronger Navy and protested against

any idea of an immediate evacuation of Egypt, for which Mr. Gladstone had declared. We had, he said, duties to perform in that country. The first was to set up a stable Government—a Government that could stand alone and make itself respected. A second duty was to take care that no foreign Power should afterwards occupy the position we should vacate. Whether there were two Schools in the Liberal Party or not, there was only one opinion on this point—that no strong foreign nation should be permitted to occupy the great highway between our Indian and Colonial possessions and ourselves.

There was at any rate no question as to which School claimed Lord Rosebery, and the speech, which certainly represented the very extreme of Liberal Imperialistic sentiment at the time, was taken as a criticism of Mr. Gladstone's attitude. Lord Rosebery, indeed, watched with great impatience the unfolding of the miserable chapter of events which ended in the tragedy of Gordon's death. When, however, the fall of Khartum set the country on fire, he did not let his dissatisfaction interfere with an immediate movement to Mr. Gladstone's support. He declared that it was a time, not to turn out the Government, but to strengthen it in every way ; and this gesture was at once accepted in the spirit in which it had been made. Two days later, at the same moment that definite news of General Gordon's death was published, it was announced that Lord Rosebery had rejoined the Government, entering the Cabinet as Lord Privy Seal and First Commissioner of Works.

The leading organ of Liberalism hailed him, in words that could only be considered a reflection on the Cabinet as a whole, as a " new and fresh force." " Routine and formula have not mastered him. Lord Rosebery's personal devotion to Mr. Gladstone has been proved ; his enthusiastic affection for him is well known. But Lord Rosebery has not been overpowered by that ascendancy of character and intellect which sometimes seems to absorb inferior men into the mind and purpose of the chief. . . . His entrance into the Cabinet . . .

will be welcomed throughout the Colonies. It is also, we hope, a sign that a somewhat quicker apprehension of our relations with foreign Powers, and greater promptitude both of speech and action, will mark the conduct of the Government."

Certainly a more resolute spirit thereafter distinguished the conduct of the Sudanese policy, while Afghan frontier incidents which, less skilfully dealt with, might have involved war with Russia, were handled with unprovocative firmness. Despite his nominally unimportant position, there is reason to believe that for much of this improved tone Lord Rosebery was responsible. But the Government was too much discredited, and its followers too depressed and divided, for full recovery to be possible, and Lord Rosebery's chivalry in joining, as a contemporary observer put it, "a ship so deep in the trough of the sea," could not avert ultimate disaster. To many Ministers the defeat on the Budget, in June 1885, must have come in the guise of a happy release.

Many reputations had suffered permanent impairment during five years pregnant with trouble and not free from shame, and that of Mr. Gladstone in particular had sustained a temporarily disastrous depreciation. But Lord Rosebery, partly through the happy accident that his temperament had led him to leave the Government before it fell on its worst fortunes, had so improved his position that Lord Aberdeen could speak of him as the "future leader" of a Party which then included a man at once so considerable and so young as Joseph Chamberlain.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE

Attitude on Home Rule—Concentration on Foreign Affairs—Firmness and Skill—His Mark on Foreign Policy—Russia, Greece, and Afghanistan —Sumptuous Entertaining.

All men were to know later by what tenuous threads of conviction Lord Rosebery was bound to the policy of Irish Home Rule. In the 'eighties, however, he was still very much under Mr. Gladstone's influence. He had come to feel strongly that in things foreign and Imperial the Gladstonian policy, and still more the Gladstonian absence of policy, would not do. But in the region of domestic affairs the case was widely different. In such matters the younger statesman was not vividly interested; he has been inclined to take his opinions ready made, and the spell of Mr. Gladstone's prestige, to say nothing of the personal affection he inspired, sufficed to overcome the dislike with which, in the opinion of many competent witnesses, Lord Rosebery always entertained for the Home Rule policy. Lord Rosebery's career might not have suffered had he gone the way of Mr. Chamberlain ; rather he might, with the suppression of certain tendencies and instincts, have done better as the quasi-Liberal ally of a Conservative Government, than as a quasi-Conservative element of disturbance in the Liberal Party. But to have parted with Mr. Gladstone would have given him deep pain, and it was probably chiefly a personal loyalty which ranged him with Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley and against Mr. Chamberlain, John Bright, and Sir Henry James.

At any rate the part he took in the discussion of the dominant issue was exactly that which might be expected of one who, under a dominating influence, follows a course which would not be his own without that influence. Lord Salisbury took office, with a minority in the House of Commons, in June 1885; his only business was to wind up the Session and dissolve; and the real interest of these months lay behind the scenes. Lord Carnarvon, the Irish Secretary, had entered into certain conversations with Parnell regarding the possible concession of some kind of Home Rule by the Conservative Government in return for the support of the Irish members. The negotiations broke down, but nothing was said or done on the Conservative side to make the Irish believe that Lord Salisbury was unalterably opposed to any modification of the Union. They knew that he was aware of Lord Carnarvon's approaches; Lord Carnarvon remained at the Irish Office despite his known views on Ireland; the Conservative declaration against a policy of coercion still held; and all this, though as early as August 24th Mr. Parnell had declared that an Irish Parliament must be given "practically absolute power" in the island "without any control from Westminster." This formulation was hotly attacked by the Liberals. Mr. Chamberlain declared that Home Rule on any such basis meant "establishing a new foreign country, and not a friendly one, within a few miles of our shores." Mr. John Morley expressed the view that "separation would be a disaster to Ireland and a disgrace to England." Mr. Gladstone laid down, in a much narrower sense than that of Parnell, the limits within which the desires of Ireland might be satisfied, and Lord Rosebery's mind was merely "open on the Imperial side to any proposal for extended devolution that would not conflict with certain essential conditions."

In short, the Liberals (and Lord Rosebery no less than any other Liberal) were quite plain as to what they would not have, and very cloudy as to what they might be disposed to concede. Not unnaturally Mr. Parnell exhorted all Irishmen in England to vote

"against the men who had covered Ireland and deluged Egypt with blood . . . and who promised in the country generally a repetition of the crimes and blunders of the last Liberal Administration." The advice was taken, with the result that the Liberals did badly in the British boroughs; but the newly enfranchised labourers in the counties redressed the balance, and the election resulted in a Liberal majority of eighty-six over the Conservatives. The Parnellites, however, also exactly numbered eighty-six, and so held the balance of power. A stable Conservative Government was impossible in any circumstances; a Liberal Government was only possible by the purchase of Irish votes. In this awkward situation Mr. Gladstone made an attempt to secure Lord Salisbury's co-operation in evolving an agreed policy. It was unsuccessful, and he was thus forced to negotiate with Mr. Parnell.

The sequel is sufficiently familiar. When Mr. Gladstone took office at the beginning of the Session of 1886, after the defeat of the Government (which had decided against resignation) on Mr. Jesse Collings's "three acres and a cow" motion, the Liberal Party was already in the throes that heralded dissolution. Lord Hartington and Sir Henry James had declined to join a Ministry committed to any form of Home Rule; Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Trevelyan, who were not wholly decided against any change of policy, left it as soon as the principle of Gladstonian Home Rule became known. By the second week in June the issue was decided; the Home Rule Bill was rejected by a majority of twenty-nine; Mr. Gladstone, appealing to the country, was heavily defeated; and Lord Salisbury returned to office with a substantial majority.

The mere fact of Lord Rosebery's adhesion was important in view of the extent to which the ranks of Liberal Peers had been thinned by the Home Rule scheme; but it cannot be said that as a speaker he added appreciably to the strength of the Gladstonian Liberals. As the Bill never reached the Lords he was unavailable for purposes of debate, and his platform utterances were

neither frequent nor important. It is sufficient to give a single quotation. At Glasgow on June 16th, just after the defeat of the Government, he said :

> As to Mr. Gladstone's Bill, they might kill it, but they could not kill its policy. Whenever anyone turned aside from that landmark and looked to find any other on the landscape, he would see only the chained skeleton of coercion clanking dismally on a rusty gibbet on the roadside. He believed when this trouble had passed away a reunited Liberal Party would look back not without gratitude to the Government of Mr. Gladstone, which had the discernment to see and the courage to pursue the path of honesty, of conciliation, and of safety.

The prediction is in singular contrast with Lord Rosebery's own not unimportant contributions to its non-fulfilment. The fact may, however, be explained without injurious imputation. He had paid less serious attention to Ireland than to many subjects ; he had all a Scotsman's superior attitude to Ireland ; it is probable that the crisis had surprised him before he had formulated any independent idea of a remedy, beyond the rough-and-ready one of coercion and small bribery, for Irish evils. His whole temper was against concessions to Ireland, either economic or political. As to the first, his natural place was under the umbrella of John Bright; as to the second, his Imperialism gave him a general tendency to tighten rather than loosen relations all round. But, as ever in his career, there was conflict between his own inner instinct and his externally formed opinions. For the moment he permitted himself to be infected with some of Mr. Gladstone's enthusiasm. It was natural enough, having regard to the ages of the two men. Besides, Mr. Gladstone's Irish Church legislation had given him the repute of understanding Ireland as few British statesmen did ; extensions of local government were quite in the Liberal tradition ; Mr. Gladstone's contagious optimism had had full play during the Christmas holidays, which Lord Rosebery spent at Hawarden ; and it was not surprising that proposals so fathered should receive, without much thought, the support of a loyal and much pre-occupied follower.

For Lord Rosebery's mind was concentrated on wholly different matters. The discredit into which Lord Granville had fallen opened up to him the possibility of realising, at an extraordinarily early age, his most cherished ambition, that of controlling foreign affairs. Lord Granville, no longer the Granville of the Great Administration, had had to pay the penalty, not only of advancing years, but of an excessive subservience to Mr. Gladstone. The last Liberal Government had failed most emphatically in its handling of foreign affairs, and a mere return to the old order would have invited a renewal of distrust. The appointment of Lord Rosebery, generally credited with the increased vigour which had followed his admission to the last Liberal Cabinet, was calculated, on the other hand, to reassure those who, while they might have Liberal tendencies in home politics, complained that Gladstonian ascendancy at home often coincided with weakness abroad. Therefore, though there was some heart-burning, there was no serious criticism of the appointment of Lord Rosebery as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. From his own point of view the opportunity was not one to be missed. If Paris were worth a Mass, the Foreign Office was certainly not dearly purchased at the expense of a Home Rule "Credo." However short the term of office, it established Lord Rosebery's position in the Party. Gladstone held that the most serious thing, next to admitting a new man to the Cabinet, was to leave out one who had once sat in it ; and to have been Foreign Secretary once was, under him, to possess a strong claim to be Foreign Secretary again. Lord Rosebery was at this time extremely ambitious. His imagination had been fired by the achievements of Bismarck, Cavour, and Disraeli, and he aspired to restore the Palmerstonian legend in Liberal foreign policy.

He seems to have obtained from Mr. Gladstone some sort of undertaking that there should be a minimum of interference with his work and, in fact, all other Ministers were so absorbed in the Home Rule controversy that for the five months of his first term at the Foreign

Office he was left for all practical purposes alone. In this short time Lord Rosebery laid the country under an obligation (increased during his next term of office), which has been cordially acknowledged by otherwise hostile commentators. It was not merely that he, the novice, handled affairs with a firmness and skill unknown since Lord Salisbury had resigned his seals in 1880, in the gloomy conviction that an intelligent and consistent foreign policy was impossible in a country liable to the vagaries of popular passion. It was not merely that foreign statesmen, habituated to expect weakness when a Gladstonian Government held office, were suddenly made aware of a cool head and a strong hand. The great service that Lord Rosebery rendered the nation was not to be reckoned in terms of administrative efficiency during a period so short. His true claim to a place in the list of considerable Foreign Ministers was that he devoted himself with success to the establishment of a tradition of substantial continuity in foreign policy.

During the late 'seventies passion on questions many of which only remotely affected the material interests of the British people had reached almost the point of insanity. The late Lord Salisbury has written in sturdy contempt of his own Jingoes, but the Jingoes were not without excuse ; Mr. Gladstone's incursions into foreign affairs were bound to produce a frenzied reaction. The Near Eastern Question was to the late 'seventies much what the Ulster Question was to the second decade of the twentieth century. In both cases there was excuse for a wide divergence of view ; in neither was there palliation for the reckless fury with which controversy was conducted. Lord Rosebery saw clearly the great evil of permitting foreign relations to be subject to alternating gusts of popular enthusiasm. Just as plainly as Lord Salisbury he recognised the impossibility of a rational and consistent policy so long as a snap division in the House of Commons, on some small domestic question, might lead to a complete reversal of the out-going Government's outlook on exterior affairs.

He was no less alive, at a somewhat later period, to the danger and inconvenience of a standing Irish problem, every attempt to settle which produced a new cause of unsettlement. This conviction that even an inferior policy consistently pursued is better than alternate applications of two policies, which, however excellent either or both may be, are incompatible with one another, was no doubt the secret of his refusal at length to fight under the Home Rule banner, and, on the facts as he had seen them, it was no unnatural attitude for a statesman really anxious to get on with certain questions which he deemed of far greater moment. Unfortunately, if the man existed who could either settle the Irish question, or ensure for it a tolerable level of unsettlement, Lord Rosebery was not that man, either in character or in circumstance, and his abandonment of the cause to which he had committed himself, unconditionally, though without enthusiasm, aggravated rather than diminished the difficulty he was anxious to remove.

It was, happily, otherwise with foreign policy. He was strong enough to make terms with Mr. Gladstone for virtual independence, and his own views were nearly enough those of Lord Salisbury to make practical continuity possible. Mr. Gladstone had leanings to Russia and France. In his view, Russia stood for Christianity against the Turk ; France, as a Liberal Power, was marked as the natural friend of the greatest of Liberal Powers, if only some troublesome questions such as Egypt could be eliminated. Lord Salisbury, on the other hand, neither feared nor respected France, shared the Disraelian distrust of Russia, and conceived that a firm understanding with the Prussianised German Empire was the only solid basis of British policy. His deliberate opinion seems to have been that no two Powers in the world had so many interests in common as Germany and Great Britain, and that the latter was the only nation north of the Alps which could feel perfectly happy over the Prussian success of 1870.[1]

With these principles Lord Rosebery was mainly

[1] *Life of the Marquess of Salisbury* (Lady Gwendolen Cecil).

in accord, however he might differ as to the details of their application. He was a warm friend and admirer of Germany. As a connection of the House of Pitt, his historical imagination was seized with the Prussian legend ; he was a bookish man of an age when English literature was very largely an echo of German thought ; he was convinced of the practical value of the sleeping partnership with Prussia ; he had made many friendships in Germany, and through Count Herbert Bismarck was in excellent relations with the greatest of Prussian statesmen. As to Russia he was much nearer the standpoint of Disraeli than that of Mr. Gladstone, and though he cherished, like most great readers, a warm admiration for the France of literature, he was much less attracted by the France which engaged his attention as Foreign Minister, an intriguing, quarrelling, incalculable France, ruled for the most part by second-rate men, sore from the wounds of 1870, anxious to compensate in the Colonial field for her loss in Europe, sensitive for her prestige, equally nervous and reckless, with some real causes of disagreement with Great Britain, and with a disposition not only to make the most of these, but to seek or invent others. Lord Rosebery regarded this France with a somewhat illogical mixture of fear and misprision. To him she was too much of a living Power to be trusted, and too much of a dying Power to be respected. As an aristocrat he was, perhaps, a little contemptuous of the bourgeois complexion of the French Republic ; as a courtier he shared the natural monarchical dislike of a Government founded on the downfall of the Imperial family ; as a British Imperialist he resented not a little the constant pinpricks over Egypt and the inconvenient presence of France in many regions ear-marked for British control or absorption. On all extra-European questions he was, if anything, more Imperialist than the Conservative Imperialists ; and thus it happened that for the first time for many years a new tenant of the Foreign Office implied no shock of any kind. Nor did his influence end with his short term of power. After the defeat of 1886, Mr. Gladstone

was almost wholly concerned with Ireland, and Lord Rosebery made the most of his opportunity to set up a new tradition, giving the tone to Opposition criticism of foreign policy, and imbuing promising young Liberal politicians with his own notion of a Liberal outlook on world questions. During his second term of office, he was in an even stronger position to enforce his views ; he had secured in Sir Edward Grey a pupil likely to remain steadfast to his philosophy ; a very considerable body of Liberal opinion had been won over to the view that foreign policy should be excluded from the arena of acute controversy ; and thus it was that in the fateful year 1905, the advent of a Liberal Government implied no perceptible change in the conduct of the Foreign Office.

This will probably be deemed Lord Rosebery's greatest service to his country. It is true that his own views as to Germany were rejected by his own disciples, and, so far as they had support, were chiefly shared in the twentieth century by the remnant of those Little Englanders whom he had fought in the nineteenth. Himself sympathetic to Germany, highly unsympathetic to France, highly suspicious of Russia, he lived to see a Liberal Foreign Minister of his own training enlarge the Entente with France, supplement it with an understanding with Russia, and end by a declaration of war against Germany. In that sense his influence was very short-lived. But his ruling idea, that the Foreign Office should know no politics, and that there should be a substantial continuity of policy despite Party changes, was applied during the long reign of Sir Edward Grey, and, though broken during the later administration of Mr. Lloyd George, and often assailed with great vehemence during the period of Liberal ascendancy between 1906 and 1914, remained in full vigour during the greatest crisis of British history, and seems destined to endure unless some signal affront to the general sense of the nation should set up a revulsion of feeling.

For the rest, Lord Rosebery's definite work during his first short term of office is now of comparatively little

interest. He was soon occupied in a dispute with Russia over the denunciation of the article in the Treaty of Berlin, which declared Batoum a free port. Russian diplomacy, always somewhat cynical, was in the 'seventies and 'eighties distinguished by an unblushing mendacity which united with the superficial sophistication of the school of Metternich something like the innocent guile of children or savages. Lord Salisbury has left on record some piquant examples of the sheer lying, so blandly impudent that the only retort was a laugh, of all kinds of Russians, from a great statesman like Gortchakoff to some pushing young chargé d'affaires. Lord Rosebery suffered no bewilderment from Russian deception over the Batoum affair, for the case was too simple for effective lying ; but he was checkmated, and at last definitely defeated, by the sheer shamelessness of the Tsar's Ministers. Batoum became a closed port, and all that the Foreign Minister gained was the creation of a wholesome impression that it might not be safe to go too far on some question more vital.

Thus, perhaps, it was that some dangerous outstanding disputes as to the Afghan frontier were promptly and amicably settled with St. Petersburg. The difficulty regarding Eastern Rumelia was arranged, and Greece, which was threatening Turkey, was coerced by blockade into a pacific mood. Lord Rosebery, after explaining to the House of Lords the measures he had taken, received a high compliment from the late Prime Minister on the general administration of the Foreign Office. "I should not like this statement to pass," said Lord Salisbury, "without saying that so far as I am able to judge the policy which this country is pursuing is not that of one Party or one Government but of all Parties in the State."

Lord Rosebery maintained with splendour the social traditions of his office. It is said that he spent a half of his year's official salary on a single entertainment. However that may be, Lady Rosebery's evening receptions at the Foreign Office and Lansdowne House, to which all the Liberal Peers and Members of Parliament were

invited, could most advantageously sustain comparison with the correct but less enthusiastic hospitality of Lord Salisbury, who was inclined to regard ceremonial as the necessary penalty, rather than the privilege, of power. Dr. Wendell Holmes had the astonished felicity of observing at one of these brilliant gatherings the revered figure of Mr. Gladstone in guise incredible to an American—" epaulettes on his shoulders and a rapier at his side, as military in aspect as if he had been Lord Wolseley."

There was a natural sumptuousness in Lord Rosebery which fitted him for all this side of a great Minister's position. He loved, so long as the fit was on him, the glitter of the great world he was so well qualified to adorn. He delighted in everything that was costly and brilliant. It pleased him as much to live in a great museum like Mentmore, as it irked him to confine himself in the dull precincts of 10 Downing-street, which he would never use except as an office. No man ever had a higher appreciation of the substantials, and even of the more idle satisfactions of wealth ; every kind of artist, from the cook to the court jeweller, could yield keen delight to a temperament which could absorb the pleasures of a Maharajah without losing taste for those of an austere student. While, however, he enjoyed, in their place, the splendours of the millionaire Peer, it would be a mistake to imagine him as always playing the great lord. Though he could be magnificence itself on due occasion, and again on due occasion the very personification of aristocratic haughtiness—so that his manner to some pushing persons has been described as actually terrifying—he had also a genuine talent for simplicity, and even for condescension to company rather incongruous to his general disposition.

He once created some little astonishment by inviting his trainer to dinner at one of his clubs, and the week-end circle at the Durdans habitually included many who were little known to Society. His liking for writing men won him a regard rarely achieved by politicians in the world of letters, and a good deal of the general

reverence which so long survived his withdrawal from affairs was to be explained by this hold on the obscurely powerful people who contribute so much to the manufacture of what is called public opinion—in reality there are few things so private in origin. But while it might please him to be the patron of a poor man, or, laying aside for the moment his panoply of rank, to take part on equal terms in the contest of wits, he remained always the aristocrat, and a rather unpleasant surprise awaited the man who should presume to interpret an affable familiarity as an acknowledgment of full social equality. On the occasions of his unbending, he was a little like King Richard among the outlaws ; while his freedom invited informality, it was never quite safe to take the invitation literally. Few men of his day could equal Lord Rosebery in charm when he chose to be charming. Few could punish more formidably what he esteemed an impertinence, and it was an impertinence ever to forget that he was the great nobleman.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHILL OF OPPOSITION

"The Man of the Future"—Partial Detachment from Party—Varying Views of Home Rule—Plea for Imperial Consolidation—Attack on Hereditary System—Plans for House of Lords Reform.

IT WAS certainly a misfortune for Lord Rosebery, perhaps also a misfortune for his country, that the chill of long years of opposition nipped him just at the moment when he seemed to have attained, not only a great and unchallengeable position in his Party, but some zest, as well as capacity, for hard and continuous work. Up to 1884, he had shown little more than a decided fancy for politics, strengthening or languishing in proportion to the interest of the moment. But from the moment that his ambition was tempted by the prospect of a large share of concrete power, he began to divest himself of competing interest, and in 1885 he disposed of his racing stable as a distraction incompatible with serious statesmanship. A few years of continuous office, held with applause from the public and his own consciousness, would, no doubt, have overcome finally his weakness for the palm without the dust. But it was not to be ; his fate was to be associated with a Party which, when not actually in the wilderness, was even worse placed as an impotence in office ; private affliction depressed and the curse of insomnia weakened him ; and, while his nature permitted him no fruitful repose, it equally denied him the solace of productive effort.

Just after the Liberal Government fell, Mr. Gladstone, at Manchester, made the youngest member of his late Administration the subject of high eulogy and flattering

prophecy. "Of him I will say to the Liberal Party of this country, and I say it not without reflection, for if I said it lightly I should be doing injustice not less to him than to them—of him I say to the Liberal Party of this country that they see the man of the future."

For some years events seemed to justify this estimate. After a trip to India in the autumn of 1886, Lord Rosebery threw himself heartily into the business of opposition. His own view of the true part of the statesman out of office was stated in his speech in the autumn of 1904, on the occasion of the unveiling of a statue to Burke at Bristol. "I think," he said, "that every earnest man must have felt in opposition the want of sincere and serious and patriotic work, which may enable him to fulfil his duty to his country even when he is not able to do it in office." Opposition, that is to say, should not be a merely negative business of check and criticism; the Minister in retirement should help the Government and the country by devoting himself to work and thought impossible to men immersed in routine duties. This ideal Lord Rosebery did actually try, during some years, to reduce to practice, winning as his reward a quite peculiar position in public estimation.

The English people, usually credited with an intense passion for the "organised quarrel" of Party politics, have in truth tended rather to admire and support the statesman who reveals himself as sincerely more than a Party man. They have seldom failed to rejoice in any temporary breakdown of the Party system which is supposed to be the god of their idolatry. True, such satisfaction is generally short-lived, and superficially there is justification for the generalisation that the English do not love Coalitions. That, however, is only because a Coalition, being merely a temporary union of two conspiracies against the State (for the definition of Halifax can hardly be bettered), exhibits the combined vices of every Party represented. Coalitions always end by being dismissed because they actually represent Party at its worst, but they always begin by being welcomed because they are believed to prelude the

disappearance of the Party system even at its best. For what the ordinary non-political Englishman is yearning for, generally without knowing it, is the destruction of the sovereignty of Parliament and its return to its old function of a check on the executive. He does not want absolutism, but if there were no other choice he would probably prefer a frank absolutism, which he could "temper with epigrams" (and other things if necessary), to a disguised absolutism which presents no point of attack. What he does want is some sort of a king, with Ministers who are really the king's servants, and not the masters of the people. What he does want is some sort of Republic, in which officials are appointed and policies followed in accordance with the theory that the State's concerns are really the "Public Thing," whereas for over two hundred years they have been a much more private thing than the arrangements of a big football club. The average man, ordinarily seeing no hope of a change, takes a spasmodic interest in Party politics, and when he is called upon to make his choice between two sets of masters, neither of whom he loves, and two policies, each of which he actively dislikes, declares with some emphasis which set of evils he considers thoroughly intolerable. But whenever he sees a chance of getting rid of the whole system his instincts throw him on the side of the critics of Party, and even the nonsense of "business government" could find a certain support merely because it seemed to threaten the Party politician.

Lord Rosebery was, of course, no genuine rebel against parliamentary oligarchy. He never said anything approaching in strength Disraeli's denunciations of "Dutch finance" and "Venetian constitution"; in fact, he does not seem to have seen any serious meaning in Disraeli's words. He was, during the active part of his life, a strong and sometimes bitter partisan, and on his intellectual side a Macaulayan Whig; it was mainly his instincts which made him an authoritarian, an Imperialist, and a pseudo-Socialist. But there was in him something which insisted occasionally on the

kind of frankness in which some lawyers and doctors will indulge, in their more expansive moments, concerning the beauties of law and medicine ; and the public, getting the glimpse of another man behind the Party politician, was sanguine enough to suppose that it represented the bigger part of a very big personality. Lord Rosebery's occasional detachment was a capital cause of his failure as a politician ; but it was also a large element in that hold on the public mind which survived so much disillusionment.

The nineteenth century had not passed before he had reached the stage he has himself so well indicated in his admirable sketch of Lord Randolph Churchill, a fine example of what the " appreciation " founded on personal knowledge can be at its best :

> Is it not true that men often pursue their own thoughts, heedless of the Party bond, and that they wake from their absorption to find that they have strayed far from the Party camp ? And when they realise this, when they find that they are no longer orthodox in the Party sense, they are apt to ask themselves if it be necessary, or even possible, to join any other section. Their own faith has disappeared. Can they embrace a new one ? In any other they find much to repel, enough at any rate to make the exchange not worth making. So they remain content with the old label, careless if it be challenged, and become a sort of political free-thinker. Does not the same thing happen in religion ? Those who ponder for themselves the grave problems of life and eternity not infrequently become dissatisfied with their own Church without being attracted by any other, so they remain nominally what they were, or pass silently into agnosticism. The analogy is not remote, for the ideal political Party in point of belief, aspiration, and devotion should be little less than a political Church.

In this passage Lord Rosebery was certainly describing himself as he was in the year of writing (1906), and probably at least ten years earlier he had, for all practical purposes, " passed silently into agnosticism." But the public, so faithful to those who gain its faith on whatever grounds, was still expecting his emergence from his Sadducean content with a new message and a great purpose.

In the later 'eighties, of course, there was, except on the one issue of Imperialism, no hint of serious

incompatibility either with Liberalism in general or with the Irish policy of Mr. Gladstone. In view of Lord Rosebery's subsequent attitude to Home Rule it is not a little surprising that he could speak in tones so free from uncertainty as in his Presidential address to the Glasgow Junior Liberal Association on April 27, 1887. He professed "unlimited belief" in Mr. Gladstone, and as to the Irish Question said that even if Mr. Gladstone were "more super-human" than he was, it would not henceforth be in his power to postpone the Home Rule issue.

> Our duty is plain. We have to fight the battle—strenuously as I trust, earnestly as I believe—the battle of a policy of conciliation against a policy of coercion. The policy of conciliation is not strained; it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven. If you adopt it and it succeeds, you will reap a rich and an abundant harvest—an hundredfold; but if you fail you will at any rate have tried an experiment that you will never regret, and you will have placed for all time England in a better position to deal with our unhappy fellow-countrymen in Ireland.

At the time he made this pronouncement he had no longer the excuse, such as it was, of speaking without thinking. In 1886, tied to the absorbing duties of the Foreign Office, there was little time for him to weigh the arguments for and against Home Rule. In retirement he enjoyed full opportunity to arrive at a considered conclusion. Was Lord Rosebery's conclusion justly represented by the speech of Glasgow, the terms of which were constantly repeated elsewhere? If so, what happened between 1887 and 1895, apart from electoral and parliamentary difficulties, to modify his conviction? If the speech did not represent his conclusion, why did Lord Rosebery not only soften, but actually conceal, his scepticism during six years of opposition? There is much to suggest that he was never a convinced Home Ruler. Supposing the fact is to be established beyond dispute, it will be a pretty task for the political casuist to determine how far loyalty to Mr. Gladstone could justify the profession, on a vital question, of a conviction which had no existence.

On other matters he was less respectful of strong

currents of Liberal opinion ; and his speech at Leeds in October 1888, provoked an acrid comment [1] that Lord Rosebery "thought only of opinion in the Colonies," and, like his leader, was "anxious for everybody except Englishmen." The speech well illustrates Lord Rosebery's attitude at this time. He emphasised the desirability of making the Foreign Secretary a non-political officer. "I have always held," he said, "and I hope I have proved by action and also by want of action, that my belief is that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should speak whenever possible, and as often as possible, with the united voice of the English nation without distinction of Party." British foreign policy, he argued, was formerly mainly an Indian policy, but it was now becoming more and more a colonial and commercial policy. In all parts of the world the colonial expansion of other Powers—the great feature of the last two decades of the nineteenth century—was giving the British Empire extensive land frontiers, and thus increasing the possibilities of collision. On the other hand, with the strongly Protectionist policy of foreign countries, and the continual expansion of the British Dominions, colonial trade was becoming yearly of more vital importance to the Mother Country. Thus Canada was already taking nearly three and half times more per head of British produce than the United States, and Australia more than seventeen times :

> On the ground of commercial interest alone, the question is worthy of the consideration of our great commercial communities. I do not think it receives the attention it deserves. The question of the retention of our Colonies may be forced upon us at any moment by some unforeseen incident. . . . Do not flatter yourselves that if Canada and Australia were to leave you, you would retain your smaller Colonies. The West Indies would go with Canada ; Australia would take in Australasia. As to the Cape I think you might make up your minds to the secession of the Cape under circumstances such as these.

Therefore, he urged, the Colonies must be admitted to a larger share in British affairs :

[1] From the *Spectator*.

You will have to give them a right to prompt the voice of England when it speaks abroad to a much greater extent than you do at present. You must be prepared for demands, such as spoiled children sometimes make. You must be prepared in some respects to diminish your own insular freedom of action on behalf of your giant offspring abroad. But to my mind the sacrifice is worth while. The cause which we call Imperial Federation, for want of a better name, is worthy of the devotion of the people of the country. For my part, I can say from the bottom of my heart that it is the dominant passion of my public life. Ever since I traversed those great regions which own the sway of the British Crown outside these islands, I have felt that there was a cause which merited all the enthusiasm and energy that men could give to it. It is a cause for which anyone might be content to live; it is a cause for which, if need be, anyone might be content to die.

Such a speech a later generation would consider platitudinous rather than heretical; but in the late 'eighties professions of more than a very lukewarm interest in the outer Empire suggested to the average Liberal a taste for land-grabbing and an enthusiasm for expensive little wars. Lord Rosebery was, perhaps, too much inclined, in his character of the enlightened political globe-trotter, to overrate the importance of the new communities; he certainly underrated the importance of the old, and did not sufficiently appreciate the difficulties, or apprehend the dangers, of any attempt to make Great Britain's interests subservient to those of the so-called "Greater Britain." The tightening of the bonds which he seems to have had in mind would probably have led to disaster. But two beneficial effects ensued from his efforts to habituate the public mind to a wider view than that which had been common. If the error was avoided of rigidly canalising colonial development on the one hand, and of subordinating British policy to supposed colonial interests on the other, a temper was created favourable to the success of the large measures afterwards taken to federate the Australasian and South African Colonies, and to facilitate understanding and co-operation between the Mother Country and the Dominions. Scarcely less important was the influence of Lord Rosebery in weakening the old association of the ideas of "Jingoism" and Imperialism. Sir William Harcourt—careless or un-

aware of the danger of joking with the Scottish aristocrat —used to rally him on the possession of a "Jingo soul." Lord Rosebery, strong Imperialist though he was, was not a Jingo, except when, as sometimes happened, he was misled by his estimate of the profits of some scheme of expansion. He occasionally thought rather in the terms of the stockbroker than of the statesman, but he was not, like the true Jingo, attracted by the mere satisfaction of painting the map red.

During the Session of 1888, Lord Rosebery returned to another favourite project, the reform of the House of Lords. In moving for a Committee to inquire into its constitution, he made an elaborate attack on its hereditary system. His first point was the extreme and increasing unwieldiness of the House—a fault which, however serious, was far less pronounced in those days than it became after the profuse creations of Lord Balfour, Mr. Asquith, and Mr. Lloyd George. Still, Lord Rosebery had a good case. The younger Pitt, he said, was generally regarded as a great sinner in the matter of reckless ennoblement, but in the seven years from 1880 to 1887 considerably more Peers were created than during Pitt's seventeen years of office. "I am not blaming any Minister," he added dryly, "but it is probably due to the irresistible tendencies of a democratic age that this House should be largely recruited by gentlemen who are willing to form part of it. . . . Merit in this country is not likely to decrease and, therefore, the number of admissions to the Peerage is likely to grow as time goes on, and will gradually swell it to unmanageable proportions."

What, he asked, were the weaknesses of the House of Lords? "They can be summed up in one comprehensive phrase. They lie, I think, in the indiscriminate and intemperate application of the hereditary principle." That principle he attacked on the double ground that it took in unwilling legislators and did not keep out unfit legislators. On the first point he spoke with his usual bitterness when dealing with his own disability as a Peer:

> Many of your Lordships know Peers who have no wish to be legislators, who are unwillingly legislators, and would gladly be relieved of that function; and I venture to say that others of your Lordships know Peers who were not willing to be Peers, who were anxious to escape from being Peers, and who would gladly cease to be Peers. It may be said that this is the misfortune of the ordinary British citizen when he is called to serve on a jury. But the ordinary British citizen when called to serve on a jury views that as one of the rare and inevitable misfortunes of his life; but with the Peer it is a fortune or a misfortune which ceases only with death.

On the second point, it was inevitable that an assembly of five or six hundred "not unprolific families" must always be accompanied by a proportion of black sheep. It might not be a large percentage, but "a percentage in a hereditary legislative chamber, be it large or small, is a thing you cannot admit." The House of Commons had, of course, its own black sheep; but the responsibility for their presence did not lie on the House, but on the electorate.

The remedy he proposed was the abolition of hereditary right, except in the case of Peers of the blood royal, to sit in the House. First the whole body of the Peerage, United Kingdom, Scottish, and Irish, should delegate certain of their number to represent them in the House of Lords. Secondly, there should be a large number of elected Peers chosen by the County Councils and the larger municipalities. Thirdly, there would be great advantage in including representatives of the Colonies. Since, with a body of fixed numbers, the sole existing means of settling an obstinate dispute between the two Houses, namely, the free creation of Peers, would be no longer available, Lord Rosebery suggested that it should be provided that, in the event of disagreement, there should be a joint sitting of both Houses, which by certain fixed majorities should carry or reject the measure in dispute. It is interesting to note that the noble reformer rejected decisively the method afterwards adopted by Mr. Asquith in the Parliament Act, of treating a Bill passed thrice by the House of Commons as if it had received the assent of the Upper House. His chief

objection was that such a plan would involve great waste of time.

Lord Rosebery concluded with an eloquent appeal to his fellow Peers to settle this question in a period of political calm, when, although reform was in the air, there was no agitation on its behalf to which it might be deemed pusillanimous to yield:

> My Lords, there is one argument which will be brought against me to-night. People say it is not possible to introduce some reforms in an ancient country, and they follow up that with an analogy—they say that if you roughly touch an ancient building, even for purposes of repair, it is apt to fall about your ears. I venture to say that no remodelling would come suddenly on this country, and that no reform in this House, however radical it might be, would anticipate the just expectations of the people. And as for the argument and the analogy of the old building, I would venture to say this, that if the old building be sound it will safely stand repair; if the building be so unsound that it will not stand handling, in God's name let it be so certified and declared. In truth the frequent reconstructions of the House of Commons leave you no choice as to undertaking some measure of reform. In the last sixty years the House of Commons has dug new foundations for itself, and each time it has received an enormous and immeasurable accession of strength, and in the meantime we have remained practically as we were at the dissolution of the monasteries. Such a position as this is not wise, politic, or even safe to continue; it is better frankly to admit to ourselves and the world that, both in principle and it practice, we need great reform and great reconstruction. Frankness is neither a merit nor a demerit in a person who thinks as I do; it is an absolute matter of duty and reticence is little better than a crime.

Lord Rosebery, who thought so ill of his own estate, was at this time apparently convinced that the representative chamber was genuinely representative and an adequate reflection of the collective mind. His unfavourable convictions concerning the House of Lords were unchanged by time, but a day was to come when his faith in the House of Commons, and even in "democratic" government itself, was also to be found wanting.

CHAPTER IX

"LORD MAYOR" OF GREATER LONDON

Lord Rosebery a Good Londoner—The L.C.C. Formed—An Unselfish Work—Merits as Chairman—"Citizen Rosebery"—Lady Rosebery's Illness and Death—Temporary Retirement.

In the course of one of his speeches Lord Rosebery quoted the last important utterance of Lord Beaconsfield—his declaration regarding the retention of Kandahar. All the previous speakers on Beaconsfield's own side had declared that Kandahar was "the key of India." As was not unusual with him, the great Jew heartlessly demolished the arguments of his Christian friends. He had had, he said, to listen to a lot of nonsense on this key question: "I am told that the key of India is Kandahar, or that the key of India is Herat. No, my Lords, the key of India is neither the one nor the other. The key of India is London."

"That," said Lord Rosebery, "was a true saying. But you may extend it much further than that. The key of the British Empire is London."

We have here one explanation of Lord Rosebery's second "smaller patriotism"—that loyalty to London which inspired one of the most useful and unselfish passages in his public life. The North Countryman cherishes a resentment against London because it is not a genuinely English town. The Scot forgives and likes it for that very reason. To be fond of London, even to love London above other cities, is to commit no treason to the Scottish and make no surrender to the English idea. A Scot can be proud of London, and of his position in it, as a symbol of the process by

which Scotland captive put chains on her captor. Note has already been taken of Lord Rosebery's image of the Union, in which he compared Scotland to the poor man who makes a mercenary marriage, mortifying to pride at first, but in the long run a success because founded on interest. In fact, Scotland was much more like the woman who marries for money ; for the formula of such a wife : " What you have is mine, but what I have is my own," is exactly that which has so happily symbolised the position of the Scottish people since the Union. Scotland remains Scottish. England has become British. Edinburgh remains the capital of Scotland ; London is something more—and, therefore, something less—than the capital of England. It has become the capital of the Empire which, according to Lord Rosebery, it is the special mission of Scotsmen to " mould."

Nevertheless London remains in one way very English, and the one thing it is certainly not is what some people love to call it—an Imperial city. Paris, after one manner, is an Imperial city. So, after another manner, is Berlin. Vienna suggested precisely what it was, the pseudo-classical capital of an imaginary Roman Empire. But London is not Imperial, and scarcely British or English ; it is intensely local, and even, in a sense, private. On the Continent we find everywhere cities which are the expression of a single all-powerful will. They may have been founded by the whim of one despot and remodelled by that of another, or they may have been destroyed and rebuilt half a dozen times by the caprices of revolutionaries. But they all have this in common, that in the line of every street, the position of every open space, the disposal of every office and statue, they show omnipotent public spirit and public intention. The Public Thing is the paramount thing. The public power, whether it be of State or municipality, is obviously stronger than any private individual, however mighty ; the things in which everyone is interested are manifestly more important than the things in which any one person is interested. The trees in the streets are public trees ;

the statues for which a definite sacrifice of public space has been made are public statues, that is to say, they commemorate people of whom everybody has heard ; the streets themselves are named after things or people meaning something to all.

London is the exact opposite. The finest things in London, apart from a few buildings inherited from the days of the old English kingship, do not spring from the will of the monarch, or of the people ; they were the creation of great ground-landlords, men with a conception of responsibility, men with a sense of amenity, men at once rich enough to afford and intelligent enough to entertain an ambition of leaving something not unworthy of them, but still private speculators whose will was the strongest thing in society. The meanest things in London were the creation of the meanest men in London, with no sense of responsibility or amenity, no pride beyond purse-pride, no intelligence beyond sharper-cunning, but still men who were able to overbear the Public Thing. Where the great noble laid out his London estate we find the same traces of a wide and enlightened mind that we discover in the design of his very piggeries in the country, but his noblest squares and crescents still give the wayfarer a vague notion of being a trespasser. In the suburbs, which the land-jobber and jerry-builder have desolated, the effect is equally that of private exploitation ; the speculator is doing, neither more nor less than the great noble, " what he likes with his own " ; the only difference is that his likings are as low as himself. On the great London estates, there are Grosvenor-squares, Farm-streets, Davies-streets and Audley-streets to commemorate the family and its connections and developments ; in the suburbs there are Kathleen-streets, Gladys-roads, and Euphemia-avenues to immortalise the jerry-builders' daughters. The Empire is occasionally remembered in a Bloemfontein-road or a Pretoria-crescent ; but the great history of England could never be guessed from the capital's street nomenclature, and a stranger might well think that somebody named Lowndes or Doughty

was of more account in its annals than Edward I or Shakespeare.

Yet the result of this private domination of the Public Thing has been to give the more gracious parts of London a charm peculiar to itself. After all the Public Thing is a cold thing, and best suited to a southern climate, which perhaps accounts for its origin on the shores of the Mediterranean and its more and more imperfect naturalisation as one goes northward. The true fascination of London is its cosiness, its secretiveness, the way in which it contrives to be adequate to its position as the centre of many worlds and yet refuses to be put out of its way by any of them. Lord Rosebery once demurred to Sir Walter Besant's description of London as a beautiful woman. "Let the beauty pass," he said, "but she is a woman with her arms in one place, her legs in another, her head in another, and her heart in another." Lord Rosebery's phraseology is here lacking in its usual precision ; for after all that is the way any human being is built. Presumably he meant that the head and the members were disconnected ; and it would appear from other passages that it was neither because it was a beautiful city, or because it was one city at all, that he loved London. Nevertheless, London has a personality, and if we are to adopt Sir Walter Besant's figure we may say that, while Paris is a hard, fine beauty whom one can understand in a day of sight-seeing and restaurant-eating, London is one of those plainer but more subtly piquant charmers who, after twenty years of intimacy, still present long vistas of unexplored possibility. London is not England, but it is very English in the way in which it, so to speak, puts all the rooms it cares for at the back of the house. London is not, and obstinately refuses to be, in any ostentatious and ceremonial sense the capital of the Empire ; but it is in a deeper sense no bad symbol of that vast structure which was built up by individual adventurers, generally in spite of the rather specially private circle which purported to represent the Public Thing.

In Lord Rosebery's earlier days, however, the privacy

of London had been somewhat overdone. It was really ruled by nobody knew whom. The whole world might have been searched for a parallel to the anarchic conditions of the greatest of all cities. From China to Peru every great city had somebody or something well known to all men, sitting in a place every citizen could name, and admitting responsibility for the government of the town as a whole. London was managed by all sorts of obscure people hidden away in all sorts of obscure buildings, and the cabman who gave a nod of intelligence if one said "White's" or "Boodle's" would have been puzzled if asked to drive to the offices of an authority spending—often mis-spending—many thousands of public money annually. The square mile of the City had its ancient corporation. The Greater London beyond its limits was administered by numerous "vestries," over which a Metropolitan Board of Works exercised a vague general control, besides doing on its own account things nobody else was interested to do. Lord Rosebery had long felt the anomaly of this state of things. He had long favoured a policy which, to use his own felicitous phrase, would make London "not a unit, but a unity." He had time and time again protested against the neglect by Parliaments and Governments of the great problem lying at their very doors. And when, in 1888, the Conservative Administration, under the stimulus of the Chamberlain Alliance, felt that it would be a progressive and popular thing to undertake a reform of Local Government, including Local Government in London, he at once showed the enthusiasm of an earnest reformer, the wisdom of a far-seeing statesman, and the loyalty of an excellent Londoner.

The Local Government Act of 1888 transferred to Elective Councils in England and Wales the duties of county government which had for centuries been performed by the justices in Quarter Sessions. It was no doubt a very primitive system by which country gentlemen summoned to try criminals and causes not distinguished enough for the assize judge administered, almost incidentally, the public affairs of perhaps half a

million people. But on the whole the administration was not inefficient ; it was certainly very economical ; and so far as the country was concerned the chief effect of the reform was to leaven the lump of taciturn and thrifty county magnates with an element that tended to talk and extravagance. In London, however, the Act produced a genuine and, on the whole, a beneficial change. It was, indeed, an absurdity to give the title of county to an urban area of various character and of most irregular contour, carved out of Middlesex, Kent, Surrey, and Essex. It was an equal absurdity to suppose that the mere formation of this fictitious unit would at once endow it with corporate identity. It was an unduly sanguine expectation, which time has not justified, that the concession to Londoners of periodical opportunities of voting for one of two sets of obscure people would produce the kind of civic spirit which exists in the great provincial towns. It would probably have been better to place London under the control of a special department of State, to administer it through a hierarchy of Crown officials as carefully selected as the members of the Indian Civil Service in its palmiest days. Experience has proved what argument from the nature of things suggested, that in general Londoners will not interest themselves continuously in local affairs. They know little about local questions and less about local candidates. The voting at elections is done by two minorities of extreme views ; the candidates voted for are for the most part either honestly solemn nonentities or aspiring second-rate people with axes of some kind to grind. Even in the City councillors are decidedly below the first rank of business men ; the parliamentary representation of London is decidedly undistinguished, apart from some defeated Minister who has found it convenient to take refuge in one of the numerous constituencies where a contest is never known ; the Borough Councils are nests of nobodies.

Lord Rosebery deserves high credit for seeing at once that the formation of the County Council, while it might prove the means of rousing London from the civic

indifference due to its vast size and its lack of common interest, was in many ways a dangerous experiment. It had been launched in a hasty and somewhat unconsidered manner, at a time when a wave of unrest was passing over the working-class mind, agitated by great Labour struggles ; and, to use his own words, its enormous possibilities were matched by its enormous risks. "It seemed to me," he said afterwards, "that the public was not aware of the magnitude of this experiment, and that the men of thought, leisure, and business capacity—with whom London abounds to an extent disproportionate even to its vast population—should come forward to give their best energies to so noble a work, and make it a success. I felt, however, that I could not expect others to do what I shrank from myself, and so, very reluctantly, and with a strong sense of unfitness, I became a candidate."

His action was the more creditable because this plunge into civic labours must have been in many ways repellent, and could promise him no direct political advantage. His temper was by no means specially fitted for close and intimate co-operation with men drawn from all London classes, and when we consider that he was no pushing politician making his way, but already almost, if not quite, next to Mr. Gladstone in the Liberal hierarchy, his entry into municipal life must be regarded as a sacrifice and a condescension prompted by the purest public spirit. From that point of view he had his full reward. For a time he actually accomplished the miracle of making London's affairs interesting to Londoners, of attracting to the Council men of high character and some distinction, and of keeping at bay the elements which always threaten to degrade and taint the local politics of the metropolis. Nor was the effect of his action confined to London ; it soon became the fashion for great Peers to take an interest in the affairs of the big towns with which they were connected, and the 'nineties were remarkable for a long list of noble mayors.

The first London County Council election resulted in the return of a Progressive majority. An attempt

had been made to keep politics out of the contest, but in practice the dividing line between Progressive and Radical, and between Moderate and Conservative, was imperceptible. To the more extreme Progressives the nomination of Lord Rosebery as Chairman was unwelcome, but the great majority of the Party were fully sensible both to the lustre imparted by Lord Rosebery's presidency, and to its practical use in steadying a body of which so many members were new to business and heady with democratic fervour. He was still regarded as "advanced," and as rather specially sympathetic in regard to all working-class questions. But he was also, as a great nobleman, and one who could hardly be suspected of abetting predatory designs, most useful in lending respectability to a Party which had caused a certain nervousness by the audacity of its programme. Even the defeated Moderates had to admit that, if there must be a Radical Chairman, Lord Rosebery was on all grounds the least objectionable Radical. Thus the motion for his election was carried by over a hundred votes to seventeen. Mr. John Burns, who afterwards became a friend and patron of Lord Rosebery, was included in the minority. He, like the rest of the objectors, could not deny the noble candidate's complete fitness for the post, but he felt some prejudice against a Peer occupying such a position on a popularly elected body. In deference to the sentiment which thus found its most emphatic expression, but which was entertained in a minor degree by many who voted in the majority, the rule of "no titles" was adopted, and Lord Rosebery was uniformly addressed as "Mr. Chairman." Unofficially he had another title, that of "Citizen Rosebery."

The position was no sinecure. In one year Lord Rosebery attended some three hundred committee meetings and over forty public sittings of the Council; while he was perpetually in demand for the various ceremonial duties which fall to the lot of the Lord Mayor of Greater London. To-day it was a fire brigade display; to-morrow the opening of a swimming-bath

or a library ; now a conciliation meeting with dissatisfied employees. During these twelve months all the machinery of the new governing body had to be fashioned ; most important lines of policy had to be settled ; furious reformers and stark reactionaries had to be kept from flying at each other's throats, and kept close to business. It was not light work ; it was not very pleasant work ; and probably the only consolation in it, from Lord Rosebery's point of view, was that there was no tradition of elaborate hospitality, as in the City, to maintain. Not that the noble chairman was wholly exempted from the social penalties of his position. He had to hold informal receptions in the tea-room, entertained occasionally at the house in Berkeley-square which he now occupied in succession to Lansdowne House, and once took the whole Council down to Mentmore.

It was generally admitted that Lord Rosebery made an excellent Chairman, whose only fault was a tendency to intervene a little unnecessarily, and to adopt occasionally a rather debating tone. The revelation of his gift, when he liked to use it, for hard, concrete business, strengthened the general impression of him as the coming man of Liberalism. At no time of his life had he been so continuously busy. At no time, also, did he appear more happy and care-free. He seemed to find more satisfaction in these definitely useful duties, humble as some, unattractive as others might be, than in uttering the usual resounding commonplaces of a Minister out of office.

How far, indeed, he was from scorning the obscure activities of municipal work he has attested in many speeches. " There has never been," he said at Queen's Hall in 1896, " such a problem to exercise the faith and the ingenuity and the enterprise and the enthusiasm of mankind, as this great conglomeration of human beings which is called London. Because it surrounds the Houses of Parliament it seems to be hardly anything to those Houses ; because it is the most present and the most pressing of problems it seems to be the one problem

which Governments always determine to ignore." At Whitechapel in 1892, just after the turmoil of a General Election, he recalled, as a cause of comfort, that beneath the most violent political controversies municipal life was always proceeding untouched by the strife of Parties :

> I believe that if there is one great safeguard to which we may look in the future of our country it is this—that if by any chance Party politics should become a mere scene of violence and corruption, slander and malignity, you have always below and beyond that a perfectly safe and solid substratum of public municipal life on which you may fall back, at any rate, if I may say so without confusion of metaphor, as your second line of defence. While your orators are banging tables and calling each other every kind of name, the municipal authorities go on providing gas and water and pavements for their streets, free public libraries and public baths and wash-houses, and do not care one farthing about those conflicts that are going on. . . . I attribute very great importance to the municipal life of the country ; but London up till a very few years ago had no municipal life, no municipal spirit at all, and it has been only within the last few years that a spirit has come and bid these dry bones live. To what is it that we owe this sudden revival, this sudden life of London ? In the first place I think we owe it largely to the London County Council. I think that great body made London for the first time a unit.

At Battersea, on another occasion, he distinguished the London County Council as " a centre for our hopes and aspirations, a body industrious, zealous, pure, practical, to which we can look in order to carry out our wishes," and rather daringly suggested that, since " individuals have a tendency to become not so conspicuously rich—in fact to become poorer " it was on municipal, on public, rather than on private expenditure, that hopes of beautifying London must chiefly rest.

In fact, individuals have grown constantly richer, as well as meaner and less public-spirited, while time has served to illustrate the limitations of municipal effort. But Lord Rosebery was always extremely sensitive to the spirit of any particular time, and that was a time of intense faith in municipal effort. Progressive ideas were the fashion and continued the fashion until, like everything else, " progress " was very much overdone.

A critic of the time unkindly described the Council as a collection of " Rads, cads, and fads." Lord Rosebery, who gave immortality to this snarl in one of his speeches, was no doubt sincere in his denunciation of the slanderer. But one fad at least must have put some strain on his powers of self-command for, though he admired the Puritans of the seventeenth century, he seldom showed lively affection for their representatives in the nineteenth. In the autumn of 1889 a number of councillors conceived that it was their duty to create a purer London. Moral purification was their aim. It was not enough for the Council to look after streets, tram-cars, parks, and other material things. It must also guard citizens against spiritual contamination. It could not, of course, regulate in any deep sense the lives of Londoners; but, through its powers over all places of entertainment not actually theatres, it was able to decide in some measure what people should hear or see when they had paid to amuse themselves. There was, no doubt, a certain coarseness in some of the popular entertainments, though on the whole the tone was probably more healthy than it afterwards became under the veil of a stricter formal propriety. But the one thing the reformers most disliked was coarseness ; and a great many of them seem to have identified refinement with good morals. War was, therefore, declared on all that appeared in any sense unseemly. It was alleged, among other things, that the public saw too much of one female performer's back, and this grave question had to be settled by a visit of " Mr. Chairman " and a select body of councillors of both sexes to the music-hall where Zaeo was appearing. No more convincing proof of devotion could be given, but while Lord Rosebery's municipal enthusiasm lasted he resolutely ignored the maxim of *de minimis*. It would be interesting to know precisely what was his official opinion, still more interesting to know precisely how and in what tones he expressed it, concerning this particular question of propriety.

This period of strenuous but enjoying effort was

destined to be tragically interrupted. Lady Rosebery, who had given her husband great help in his County Council work, showed, during the summer of 1890, a certain decline in health. She did not improve on going north after the recess, and early in October she was suffering from what appeared to be a feverish cold. Lord Rosebery was engaged to receive the Freedom of Glasgow, and the medical men, fearing that the patient might be alarmed by the postponement of a long-anticipated visit, advised him to go. The next day, however, he was recalled by telegram to Dalmeny, to find that the disorder had been diagnosed as typhoid fever. At first no danger was anticipated, and Lord Rosebery was even able to preside over one of Mr. Gladstone's Edinburgh meetings—an act which the veteran statesman justly described as, in the circumstances, one of "extraordinary kindness" to himself. Towards the end of October the patient's condition was grave for some days, but a favourable turn came, and there were fair hopes of a happy issue. Lady Rosebery's strength, however, was too far exhausted for her to withstand a return of the fever which came with the beginning of the third week in November, and on the 19th of that month she passed away. She died, as she had lived, in the faith of her fathers; during her illness she had sought the consolation of Jewish ministrations; and the funeral solemnities were carried out according to the strictest Jewish ritual.

The death of the Countess cast a shadow on the most various quarters. She was mourned in Society as a woman of great charm and unaffected kindliness. In her the Liberal Party was deprived of a valuable political hostess. The villagers of Mentmore, the poor in the neighbourhood of Dalmeny, had to lament the loss of one who had been to them almost an earthly providence. The poor of her own faith missed her munificence in almsgiving. But on her husband the blow descended with almost crushing force. The insomnia which was with him almost a constitutional weakness had first given him serious trouble after a riding accident in the

late 'seventies, but had yielded to the heroic cure of the County Council slavery. It now returned to torture him incessantly, and continuous loss of sleep so impaired his health that he was obliged to decline all forms of public work and seek healing abroad. Short tours in France and Spain were followed, after an interval, by a long stay in Austria, whence he was recalled by the death of his step-father, the Duke of Cleveland, and the consequent necessity of attending to the affairs of his widowed mother.

He had retired from the Chairmanship of the County Council at the end of the first year of office, and it was with some difficulty that he was persuaded to put himself forward as a candidate for the East Finsbury Division in the election of 1892. The motive for his original interest in County Council affairs, he explained, no longer existed, and he thought he could serve the Council better from without than from within. Besides his health was no longer equal to the strain of heavy duties continuously performed.

"Few of our jauntiest critics," he said, "have any notion of the labour and drudgery which a conscientious councillor must give to his work. May I fairly ask that someone less engaged, less hampered, and more fresh, shall take my place?"

It was noticed, when he attended a meeting at St. James's Hall on the eve of the Council elections, that the reference to his want of freshness was too well justified. A journalistic observer remarked the "pathetic hint of sleeplessness in his eyes," the drooping of the once sprightly figure, the hair touched with grey, and the low and broken voice with which he began. He even seemed to suffer from stage fright. But, once started, there was no diminution in the vigour of his speaking, or in the earnestness with which he appealed that "London's work should be done, not in the spirit of vestrymen, but in the spirit of statesmen."

After the election, at the urgent request of the Progressives, Lord Rosebery consented to take the chair once more, on the understanding that he must be left

free for the General Election which was obviously to take place as soon as Parliament had got through the work of a short session. The second Chairmanship afforded no noteworthy incident, and Lord Rosebery's service to London is to be measured by the work of his first year of office. But that alone entitled him to the large respect he in fact earned by his unselfish devotion—a respect which was almost his sole asset in the difficult days which were to follow.

CHAPTER X

THE FOREIGN OFFICE AGAIN

The 1892 Election—Disinclination for Office—Accepts Foreign Secretaryship—His Policy in Egypt—Uganda—Opposition in Cabinet—Impression on Staff—His Thoroughness and Firmness—Significant Admission on Home Rule.

DURING THE two years after his wife's death Lord Rosebery had virtually retired from politics and as late as the eve of the Session of 1892 he wrote from Naples that he was no longer interested in public life—a statement which Sir William Harcourt dismissed as only a specimen of "pretty Fanny's way."[1] History had been making, meanwhile, chiefly to the disadvantage of the Liberal Party.

Very shortly after the disaster of 1886 there were signs of a reaction in Mr. Gladstone's favour. The Irish policy in projection began to be compared not unfavourably with the Irish policy in possession. Coercion had produced its usual result and no-result—settling no Irish difficulty, it had distressed the English mind and troubled the English conscience. Mr. Balfour's Administration might be firm, judicious, courageous, or what not; but it could hardly be popular. Lord Salisbury was growing old, and with his increasing tendency to withdraw himself from the public gaze, had become almost in his lifetime a historical figure. Lord Randolph Churchill had gone, and with him the lure of "Tory democracy." There was little either in the work or the character of the Government to invoke enthusiasm. Its policy, while not generally illiberal, was uninspired. It included some fairly

[1] *Life of Sir William Harcourt* (A. G. Gardiner).

competent administrators, but it possessed, apart from the Cecils, no personalities to compare with Mr. Gladstone, Lord Rosebery, Mr. John Morley, or Sir William Harcourt.

A Cabinet which at its formation seemed sufficiently well suited to the times abruptly became something of an anachronism. There are periods during which nothing seems to happen but everything seems to change. Such a period was that which divided 1885 from 1888. It is difficult to put one's finger on a single event of special significance, yet the former year belongs emphatically to the older, the latter to the newer world of politics. The establishment of the first militant Radical halfpenny evening paper during the interval was an announcement, for those who cared to note it, that a new leaven was at work on the old lump. If the nation was not in a Liberal mood—and in fact the late 'eighties were full of distrust of official Liberalism—it was still less of a Conservative temper. The time was one of rather vague but very real revolt. The first crop of youth educated in the State schools had almost reached maturity, and boys and girls were teaching their fathers and mothers, perhaps even their grandmothers. It was the commonest thing to find a home in which the positions of parent and child were reversed, and the greybeard absorbed, with eager and perhaps excessive respect, the wisdom of the stripling.

Labour, though constantly growing in self-consciousness, was as yet content mainly to fight Conservatism. The newer kind of working-class politician had, it is true, taken the measure of Mr. Gladstone, and perhaps of Mr. John Morley ; he had no illusions concerning Sir William Harcourt and the Whigs ; he was by no means inclined to recognise an identity of interest with the great manufacturer or the pluralist company director whom chance or interest ranged on the Liberal side. But he was not disinclined to believe that the Liberal Party, when the turn of its younger men came, might serve part of his purpose ; and in the meantime he could expect more immediate gain by supporting

Liberalism, always since the Home Rule split in need of allies, than by adding his sum of more to the too much of English Conservatism. Thus everything that was modern, brisk, ambitious, or discontented among the masses was potentially Liberal, and might have become actually so but for two facts. To please one set of their supporters the leaders of the Liberal Party adopted a social policy which was repellent to many working-men. Much support was doubtless lost by the zeal which promoted, and the mistaken opportunism which welcomed, the Local Veto cry, but even so Mr. Gladstone seemed assured of a substantial majority, if a dissolution should come, when suddenly the whole aspect of affairs was altered by the Parnell divorce case.

As a result of the fierce conflict which ensued, Nationalism, as a constructive thing, ceased to exist ; and the Liberal Party found itself pledged to a major policy which, even were it approved by Britain, could evidently not be applied in Ireland, since the only people who could possibly work a Home Rule Act were engaged in flying at each other's throats. The dilemma was hideous. To repudiate Home Rule was to confess insincerity ; to cling to Home Rule was to embrace impotence. The Liberal leader chose the latter evil, and suffered the inevitable penalty. The unsatisfactory character of the election of 1892 is no mystery. There was enough dissatisfaction with the outgoing Government to exclude it from a further lease of power ; there was not sufficient confidence in the incoming Government to give it a reasonable majority.

It is not the people of unchangeable views who dictate the complexion of British Governments. Such people are—or used to be—a fairly fixed quantity. In England the Conservatives had a majority of them ; in Scotland and Wales, for local reasons, the advantage was the other way. Thus the event of any election was decided by a relatively small body of fluctuating opinion, chiefly English, which, in a reasonably balanced state of Parties, generally favoured the side the more likely to win. It was and is usual for politicians to

despise, even while seeking to capture, these voters of no fixed allegiance. In fact they fulfil a very useful function. For while they are usually most concerned to secure a strong Government they often use their votes, when any particular Party is threatened with utter disaster, to mitigate its misfortune and moderate the triumph of its rivals. For that reason the modern practice of holding all elections on the same day has perhaps less to recommend it than is generally conceived. There is no chance for later polls to correct the earlier results, either by making decisive a small advantage or by reducing a success that threatens to be too pronounced for the country's health.

When in doubt this body of unfixed English opinion votes Conservative, for the very simple reason that it knows what, in normal times, it can expect of a Conservative Government—a thing not to be said of any other Party. But it invariably declares itself against any Party, of whatever nominal complexion, which is troubled with serious schisms, or is committed to a policy which, for any reason, appears to be unworkable. Mr. Balfour fell on disaster in 1906, not because the country disapproved Tariff Reform, but because it disapproved a Government which could not make up its mind about Tariff Reform. Mr. Asquith fell on disaster in 1918 not because it was likely that he would form a bad Government, but because it was quite certain that he could not form a Government at all. Mr. Lloyd George fell on disaster in 1922 because he obviously wanted to make the existence of any Government dependent on his personal will, and the country would not have it.

It was this political realism that proved fatal to the Liberals in 1892. The English electorate was not voting against Home Rule, but against a weak Government. But as Scottish and Welsh voters, richer in principle or poorer in political capacity, were less influenced by such considerations, the only effect of English discrimination was to make a weak Government weaker yet. Lord Rosebery was against taking office

with a majority of forty, assuming the support of an Irish Party divided against itself ; and when the Salisbury Government was demolished by an adverse vote in the new House of Commons he showed no inclination to join the last and least fortunate of Mr. Gladstone's Administrations. Not only did he see clearly the futility of grappling with commitments so gigantic by means so slender, but he recognised that the moral case for the Irish policy had undergone disastrous depreciation. Whatever arguments there might have been for conceding Home Rule to the demand of a solid and clearly articulate Nationalist Party, they were demolished by the present confusion of Irish affairs. In 1886, when the Unionist said "Let well alone," it was possible to retort: "We should be delighted to do so, if anything were well." In 1892, even people who admitted that things were very ill in Ireland could still say without effective rejoinder: "Leave ill alone, lest a worse thing happen."

Which, in such a case, were the greater insincerity—to declare outright that, good or bad in itself, Home Rule was for the time an impracticable policy, or to go through the mechanical forms of carrying out the undertaking to the Irish? The majority of the Liberal leaders decided, though apparently with no enthusiasm, for fulfilling their pledges to the letter since they could not be honoured in the spirit. Lord Rosebery, left to himself, would certainly have shelved Home Rule—repudiating nothing, but permitting the question (to use John Morley's phrase) "to fall into the limbo of pious opinions." Sir William Harcourt would no doubt have taken the same course. But Mr. Gladstone was too closely identified with Home Rule to act thus, and Mr. Gladstone's will was paramount. To oppose Mr. Gladstone was the one thing Lord Rosebery could not bring himself to do. To co-operate with Mr. Gladstone he felt at this moment to be difficult. He therefore determined on a course which would enable him to escape equally self-reproach and stultification. He pleaded ill-health as an excuse for refusing office.

There might be some room for such hesitation on physical grounds to assume the heavy burden of foreign affairs—though months before John Morley had reported him as having recovered his usual spirits, and being "again alert, ready, and *suivi*"—but it may be fairly inferred that the main reason of his unwillingness to join the Ministry was conviction that it must not only fail, but fail in such a way as to compromise the credit of those associated with it.

But while it was easy for so clear-sighted a politician to grasp the ugly political fact in all its dimensions, his personal position was a very painful and perplexing one when Mr. Gladstone, and all Mr. Gladstone's following, insisted that his *nolo episcopari* must be fatal to the Government. Should he leave in the lurch the aged statesman who had been to him almost a father, who had distinguished him as "the man of the future," who was known to look upon him as the natural heir to the Liberal leadership? On the other hand, should he risk health, imperil his fame, expose new areas to criticism, give up the ease which, always precious, was now more attractive to him than ever, for the sake of a major policy of which he secretly despaired and disapproved, and of a parcel of minor projects for which he cared less than nothing?

Lord Rosebery tried to avoid the difficulty by the simple expedient of physical flight. He withdrew to the West of Scotland immediately after the election, and declined Harcourt's telegraphic invitations to "come to Town at once." John Morley had to play the part of Stanley to this political Livingstone. What arguments were used by the philosophical Radical can only be conjectured; but they so far succeeded that Lord Rosebery was brought into personal contact with Gladstone. But the problem was still not solved. While Lord Rosebery played the paragon of filial piety to Gladstone's heavy father—tears seem to have been shed freely during these interviews—he was still stubborn. It is said that he refused the Foreign Office thrice in five days, and that Mr. Gladstone had to

contemplate asking the Queen to use her personal influence to induce him to take the seals. The terms on which he finally agreed to enter the Government were the measure of his chief's necessity. During the election Mr. Gladstone had declared, quite unnecessarily, for the evacuation of Egypt. Lord Rosebery now insisted that this pledge should be disregarded so long as he was responsible for foreign affairs, and in general stipulated for substantial continuity with the policy of the late Government. He chose for his Under-Secretary Sir Edward Grey, a young Liberal of like mind, and the Foreign Office, aloof and for the most part disdainful of criticism, was in truth rather a self-contained Power than one of the departments of a weak and distracted Government.

Lord Rosebery was soon to appreciate the value of a free hand in dealing with Egyptian affairs. He had been installed but a few months when a crisis arose which called for all his firmness and judgment. The question of the English in Egypt, like everything else, was a very mixed matter. That the British occupation was effected on the understanding that it was a temporary measure to meet a passing emergency, that repeated pledges had been given by British Governments that evacuation should take place as soon as the circumstances justified such withdrawal, was undeniable ; and France, in calling for a fulfilment of these promises, had technical justification. But England could also argue that the emergency had not in fact passed, and that circumstances did not justify evacuation. It was certain that a native Egyptian Government, unsupported by the British power, would either fall into imbecility, or would become the prey of some European rival of Great Britain. An Egypt in anarchy could not be tolerated by any British Government, in view of the importance of the Suez Canal to Imperial communications, in view also of the extensive investment of British capital in Egyptian enterprises. An Egypt under foreign and probably unfriendly control was still more unthinkable.

On the other hand, the French objection to the

British occupation was not quite so unreasonable as many British observers, annoyed by continual pin-pricks, were apt to assume. France, it is true, had destroyed much of the strength of her position by withdrawing in 1882 from co-operation with Great Britain in the restoration of order. But she could, on general grounds, claim that her interest in Egypt, if not equal to that of Great Britain, was still considerable. Egypt was important to the communications of the French colonial Empire, as well as to those of Great Britain. Egypt's civilisation, so far as it was European, was much more French than English. France, like Great Britain, had large vested interests in the country, and a vast number of nationals concerned in its fortunes. There was, in short, always a case for discussion, and the French mood at this time was to miss no opportunity of discussing, with acrimony and even malevolence, any sort of case with Great Britain. Mr. Gladstone's pre-election declaration was almost an invitation to the renewal of disputes which had whitened the hairs of more than one British Foreign Minister ; and an occasion soon arose to test the value of the Liberal leader's profession.

At the end of 1892 Fehmy, the Egyptian Prime Minister, fell dangerously ill, and the young Khedive proposed to appoint in his place one Fakry, notorious for his anti-British sentiments. It had been laid down by Lord Granville in 1884 that the British Government was entitled to "offer advice" to the Khedive in respect to such matters. This doctrine being now challenged, in a manner as offensive as it was practical, Lord Rosebery instructed Lord Cromer, the British Agent-General in Egypt, to "inform the Khedive, in case of his refusing to take your advice, that His Highness must be prepared to take the consequences of his act." The desired effect was produced. The Khedive cancelled the objectionable appointment, substituted a more acceptable nominee, and was congratulated by Lord Rosebery on his "sound judgment" in retracing the untoward course which he had taken.

Her Majesty's Government, it was added, "noted with pleasure the solemn assurance of his desire to work in cordial co-operation with them and follow their advice in all matters of importance."

The matter, however, was not so ended. France protested against "what seemed like a claim on the part of Great Britain to nominate the Khedive's Prime Minister." "That is not the way I should put the matter," Lord Rosebery replied, but he agreed that Great Britain did claim to give "authoritative advice" as to the choice of Ministers. "So long"—so ran his instructions to the British Ambassador in Paris—"as the British flag was in Egypt, and British forces were in occupation, we could not allow the whole Administration, beginning at the top, to be reversed at the whim of the Khedive."

Lord Cromer had expressed a wish that, in view of the somewhat disquieting circumstances, he should be able to announce at once that the British garrison in Egypt would be strengthened. Lord Rosebery promised that this should be done if the necessity arose; but certain members of the Cabinet raised objections, and it was not until some days after that the announcement was made, coupled with a declaration "that the measure implied no change of policy or any modification of the assurances the Government had given regarding Egypt." In view of Mr. Gladstone's declaration, this statement, however necessary, could not escape the reproach of jesuitry, and it is hardly surprising that it was interpreted in Paris as a somewhat bare-faced example of the traditional perfidy of Albion. The French Government retorted in a Note of scarcely veiled menace, reserving to itself the right, in case of troubles arising in Egypt, of considering, in accord with the Powers and the Sultan, what measures might be necessary to safeguard the interests France possessed in common with all the Powers guaranteeing the independence of the Ottoman Empire. For a moment the situation seemed dangerous. But Lord Rosebery replied in a tone equally removed from weakness and from bluster;

the French Foreign Office did not persist in its bellicose attitude ; and the affair happily ended.

Two other questions in which France was concerned occasioned much anxiety. The first had reference to Uganda, described by Stanley as the pearl of Central Africa—a pearl, however, which hardly promised to pay for the expense of setting. So at least the British East Africa Company, which now proposed to withdraw from the region, had found it. It so happened that Uganda had been a battlefield between British Protestant and French Jesuit missionaries, and the projected withdrawal of the Company opened up for the latter the hope of forming a State under French influence. Lord Rosebery, apprehensive of foreign complications in the region of the Upper Nile, was resolved to keep Uganda, despite the deep disgust of Mr. Gladstone and still more of Sir William Harcourt, who protested against the "attempt to create another India in Africa." Lord Rosebery, it is said, was in a minority of one at the Cabinet Council held to decide the fate of this territory. Mr. Gladstone, however, was induced to grant a three months' respite ; during the interval there was much agitation in the Press on behalf of Lord Rosebery's view ; the temporary difficulties were met by temporary expedients ; and in the end the Foreign Minister got his way. Early in 1894 a British Protectorate over Uganda was declared.

This victory, however, was gained only at heavy cost. It greatly accentuated the feeling against Lord Rosebery among those who, like Sir William Harcourt, regarded the policy of constant expansion as one which could only end in bankruptcy. A Cabinet break-up was only barely avoided at the time, while the effect of the transaction was to convince both sections of the ultimate incompatibility of their attitudes. For the moment, however, Harcourt showed as conciliatory a spirit as could comport with his determined opposition, while any irritation that Lord Rosebery may have felt was soothed by the gift of the Garter, which had long been an object of desire and some jealousy.

A more serious but—as regarded home politics—less controversial question was the delimitation of the British and French territories on the Upper Mekong. The result of the protracted negotiations was a very good bargain for the French, a very bad bargain for Siam, and an indifferent bargain for Great Britain. It was, however, a satisfaction that one at least of the many awkward Anglo-French problems was permanently solved when the last Convention was signed by Lord Rosebery's successor.

The outbreak of the China-Japan war involved Lord Rosebery (while Prime Minister) in new anxieties. In view of the jealousies of the European Powers, he found it impossible to accede to the proposal on behalf of China that he should attempt intervention, and the fighting proceeded until the Middle Kingdom was forced to sue for peace. Japan secured the island of Formosa, or Taiwan, and exacted a great money indemnity, but was deprived of the greater fruit of her victory, the Liau-tung Peninsula, by a combination of three European Powers—Russia, France, and Germany. An appeal was made by Japan to Lord Rosebery; but he could only advise that intervention was impossible, and that she would be wise to bow to a harsh necessity—to which a further touch of bitterness was added by the Russian seizure of Port Arthur, followed by the German "lease" of Kiauchau.

A minor matter of some interest was the negotiation of an extradition treaty with the Argentine Republic. This important subtraction from the number of sanctuaries available to fugitives from British justice was the sequel to a scandal which dealt a minor but quite superfluous shock to Mr. Gladstone's Government. When the Parliament elected in 1892 assembled there was no more respected Liberal member than Mr. J. Spencer Balfour, reputed to be enormously rich, and supposed to be chairman of more public companies than any other politician. Very shortly after it was discovered that his first name was Jabez, and that he was a swindler on the gigantic scale, whose private life was scarcely

more creditable than his financial methods. To the authorities of the Argentine Republic, whither Jabez Balfour had fled, Lord Rosebery described Her Majesty's Government as "very anxious that his arrest should be effected," and indeed it was important that a Ministry so shakily established should not be suspected of slackness in bringing to justice a once prominent supporter of the Party machine. The Argentine Republic, however, refused to surrender Mr. Balfour (in the absence of a treaty) without reciprocity, and Lord Rosebery therefore made all speed to place on a regular and permanent basis the arrangements between the two countries for the extradition of criminals.

The hard work of the Foreign Office suited its chief; the rough cure of fifteen or sixteen hours' a day of steady occupation temporarily cured his sleeplessness; friends noticed that he had regained much of his old alertness; and the buoyancy of his spirits is sufficiently attested by his speech at the Royal Academy banquet of 1893. Replying to the toast of "Her Majesty's Ministers," he claimed that "rightly each office of the Crown is not merely a place for the transaction of business, but a realm of imagination." Thus the Secretary of State for India dreamed of Oriental splendour, only marred by the awful spectre of a constantly depreciating rupee. Thus the Secretary of State for War indulged his virile imagination with visions of martial pageantry.

> But when I come to my own office, I transcend them all, I have only to open a red box to be possessed of that magic carpet which took its possessor wherever he would go. Perhaps sometimes it carries me a little farther than that. I open it, and find myself at once in those regions where a travelled monarch and an intellectual Minister are endeavouring to reconcile the realms of Xerxes and Darius with the needs of the nineteenth century—I smell the scent of the roses and hear the song of the bulbul. I open another box, which enables me to share the sports of the sea-seal—his island loves, his boundless swims in the Pacific; I can even follow him to Paris and see him, *corpus delicti*, laid on the table of the Board of Arbitration.[1] I can go still farther. I can transfer myself

[1] A reference to the Behring Sea dispute, then in process of settlement.

to the Southern Pacific, where three of the greatest States in the world are endeavouring, not always with apparent success, to administer one of the smallest of islands—the island of Samoa—in close conjunction and alliance with one of our most brilliant men of letters.[1] I will say this of my office—I follow every Court. Not a monarch leaves his capital on a journey, but I am on the platform, in the spirit if not in the body. I am in the spirit in the gallery of every Parliament. I am ready and anxious—but not always successful—to be present at the signing of every treaty. I think I have laid a sufficient claim before you to insist that, in future, when you consider Her Majesty's Ministers, you may not consider them merely as political creatures, but as persons who have also their imaginative side, as official Ariels roaming through time and space, not on broomsticks, but on boxes.

The impression made by Lord Rosebery on his staff was vivid. There are two kinds of Ministers respected by officials—the one who knows, and the one who is not ashamed to admit that he does not know. The one quite hopeless kind of Minister is he who, knowing nothing, thinks it ignominy to ask a frank question. Lord Rosebery won both kinds of respect. He was found to possess an enormous amount of information, accurate in the highest degree—for though he could be slothful, he could not be slovenly ; accuracy in all matters was almost a vice with him, and his hatred of every kind of sloppiness in detail was one cause of his not getting on too well with some of his colleagues. Concerning foreign affairs, not only was he well acquainted with all the twists and turns of the larger controversial currents, the Niles and Mekongs of diplomacy, but he often revealed an intimacy with those obscure details of political topography which ordinarily interest nobody but the official. His respect for Mr. Gladstone, vast as it was, hardly permitted him to excuse that statesman's ignorance of the outer Empire entrusted to his care.

Lord Rosebery's passion for precision is illustrated by a story as familiar and as illuminating as that of Lord Randoph Churchill's " damned dots." " What *is* a protocol ? " asked Lord Rosebery, when one of the Foreign Office staff glibly pronounced the word. Now it

[1] The late R. L. Stevenson.

is certain that Lord Rosebery was not ignorant of the etymology and ordinary significance of this terminological Proteus. His knowledge of Greek must have told him that it had something to do with being first, and something also to do with glue, though he may or may not have known that the original protocol was a sheet glued on the first page of a manuscript giving brief particulars of what followed. His general knowledge of affairs must have informed him that a protocol is some kind of diplomatic memorandum. But was it "the first rough draft of the instrument?" Or "the record of a transaction?" Or "the original copy of a despatch, treaty, or other such thing?" Or "a document serving as a preliminary or opening of any diplomatic discussion?" Or "a diplomatic document or minute of proceedings signed by friendly Powers in order to secure certain diplomatic ends by peaceful means?" A protocol might mean any of these things and half a dozen more, as any good dictionary would have informed Lord Rosebery. The question was what it meant at the Foreign Office. He did not know with absolute precision, and he could not be content with less than absolute precision. Much would be spared if all Ministers were as scrupulous to use no word without satisfying themselves as to its exact weight.

Lord Rosebery's principle of action is indicated in his study of Napoleon in *The Last Phase*. He speaks of Napoleon in the first period of his consulate as an almost ideal ruler :

> He was firm, sagacious, energetic, just. He was, moreover, what is not of less importance, ready and anxious to learn. He was, indeed, conscious of extreme ignorance on the civil side of his administration. But he was never ashamed to ask the meaning of the simplest word or the most elementary procedure; and he never asked twice. He thus acquired and assimilated all necessary information with extraordinary rapidity. But when he had learned all that his counsellors could teach him, he realised his immeasurable superiority to all men with whom he had been brought into contact.

Lord Rosebery's own knowledge of things in general

was great enough for him to feel no false shame in acknowledging its limitations; his intelligence was too high for him to be easily jealous of intelligence in a subordinate; and with equal skill he avoided the opposite dangers of too much respect and undue disregard for the experience and judgment of the specialist. When convinced of the capacity of an agent, then, and then only, he gave him full confidence and a large freedom of action. Thus during the Egyptian crisis outlined above, he placed complete trust in Lord Cromer's discretion; and it was due to the perfect understanding between them that the Minister and the Proconsul, playing into each other's hands, carried through a difficult game, which in less adroit hands would have been a most dangerous one, with perfect success.

His manner with ambassadors was easy and good-natured, but did not, on occasion, lack a touch of the peremptory. At the time a permanent official confided to Sir Edward Russell a hint of what went on:

> How Bismarck's poor devil of an Ambassador came down, wretched and flustered, and said the Chancellor was in a great rage and going to recall him, and implored him to yield everything Bismarck wanted, in a single afternoon. How most of our Foreign Secretaries conceded points, or seemed to, because of the great importance of being all right with Germany. How Lord Rosebery, on the contrary, would say with perfect temper, but blank firmness, "You know it's no good; Parliament wouldn't have it. If you go further, Government wouldn't have it. And, if it comes to that, I wouldn't have it. But we can understand that and be friends."

Disraeli once complained that the great fault of middle-class Ministers was that they were afraid of responsibility. It would perhaps be more exact to say that it is extremely difficult for a middle-class Minister to hit the happy mean between timidity and recklessness. It is only a great noble who can adopt the philosophy of the late Lord Salisbury, as illustrated in the anecdote related by his daughter.[1] Somebody had commiserated with him on his "burden of responsibility." Lord Salisbury declared that he never

[1] *Life of the Marquess of Salisbury* (Lady Gwendolen Cecil).

felt any such burden. He was, indeed, most conscious of the burden of choice, but when a choice was once made he would pen a despatch, which might mean war all over Europe, with no sense whatever of responsibility for its results. His part was done when he had made up his mind, after the gravest consideration of all the available facts, as to the course he ought to pursue. Lord Rosebery had some share of this spirit, which is perhaps the chief justification for the aristocratic Foreign Minister or Chief of Administration.

Other things being equal, the aristocrat will always be at once more wary and more resolute than the middle-class man. In the hunting field he will not take risks which are not worth while, because he has a very strong conviction that his library is much more comfortable than the family mausoleum, but on the other hand, if the risk does seem worth while, he is troubled by no uneasiness about his loss of earning power or the fate of his descendants. The same is true of a political risk. The last man to be reckless is the man whose personal prosperity is so largely bound up with his country's welfare, but whose position is such that, while he may lose much, he can scarcely, by any imaginable stroke of fate, lose all. The death of the duel, the discontinuance of impeachment, have left the statesman of family nothing which a mind of ordinarily firm texture need fear. If one result is to endow him with a massive cynicism in such matters as the giving of pensions and sinecures to his friends, relatives, and followers, another is to make him, at his highest, the best possible tenant of the Foreign Office, and no British Prime Minister has yet incurred the risk of making a middle-class man responsible for exterior policy. The middle-class mind in Cabinets, however, always exercises some degree of influence over the Secretary of State, and sometimes, as the mention of Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Haldane, and Mr. Lloyd George will recall, foreign policy is very largely affected by such exterior pressure. Whenever this has been the case, we find most of the evils both of

precipitancy and irresolution. The middle-class man always underrates his fences before he reaches them, and nearly always funks them when they loom formidable before him. If he is specially well-plucked, as Mr. Chamberlain was, he does not funk and, in the absence of great luck, comes down badly. Poor men do not seem to suffer much more than the aristocrat from these special disabilities. Napoleon is hardly a case in point, for, though his family was poor, it was noble ; his murmured "*nous autres nobles*" was very near getting him into trouble in the Republican days. But Alberoni and Lincoln, both sprung from the soil, had heads as cool and nerves as strong as any Richelieu or Bismarck.

Lord Rosebery possessed in large measure this quality of his station ; and, being unusually free, by the terms of his contract, from middle-class interference, being also, by sedulous self-training, well acquainted with the realities of the European situation, he was able to give effect to his ideas. His policy might be open to criticism, but it could not be denied that he maintained the prestige of his country, under a weak and distracted Government, not less high than it had stood under Lord Salisbury.

Lord Rosebery seldom emerged from his Foreign Office seclusion, but two appearances outside the limits of his departmental work must be noted. In 1893 he performed a great national service by settling a stubborn and devastating strike in the coal mines. The owners and the men's leaders were brought together one dark November morning at the Foreign Office. The longer they sat the less chance there appeared of reaching agreement, and the breaking point seemed almost to have been reached when the rich voice of Lord Rosebery, in its most gracious inflection, was heard to pronounce a few pregnant words : "Gentlemen," he said, "there is some cold meat in the next room ; I think we had better adjourn for luncheon." The "cold meat"—never was sumptuous spread less adequately announced—proved as highly mellowing as

Mr. Silas Wigg's veal-and-ham pie, and when the parties returned to the conference table both sides were in a temper which permitted of an accommodation. Lord Rosebery had not studied in vain his favourite Dr. Johnson, concerning whom he has stated, "speaking from experience," that "in sickness, when all other books have failed, when Dickens, Thackeray, Sir Walter Scott, and other magicians have been useless to distract, Boswell's book is the only one which could engage and detain the languid attention of an invalid."[1] A good meal had, in truth, "lubricated business."

In general politics the only notable appearance of Lord Rosebery related to a question in which his personal interest was but lukewarm. He had neither the time nor the taste for "ploughing the sands." But he could not, as Liberal leader in the House of Lords, escape the futile task of moving the second reading of the Home Rule Bill. That forlorn legislative lamb he presented with due oratorical solemnities to the whetted knife of the noble butcher. Such an image is perhaps more appropriate than that actually adopted by Lord Rosebery. For he compared the Bill to a Spanish fighting bull, an animal which requires considerable killing, and is capable of doing dire mischief to its enemies. However, the passage is so excellent an example of Lord Rosebery's knack of wedding good sense and argument to lively banter, that it is worth quoting somewhat fully :

> The course pursued with this Bill in the House of Commons reminded me of a very interesting national sport to which, perhaps, none of your Lordships are addicted—I mean the Spanish bull-fight. The bull-fight in Spain is a national and almost sacred institution. They have to kill the bull; that is the primary purpose. You had to kill the Bill; that was your purpose; and you went about it very much in the same way. The first act of the drama is when the toreadors, or lance-bearers, attack the bull openly. The bull generally gets the better of them, and they are hurried from the scene. That stage is analogous to the Second Reading of our Bill. Then comes the stage when the light infantry of the bull-ring—I cannot pronounce their name, but I can write it on paper—attempt to fix light darts in the bull, to prick it all over, and to annoy and exasperate it in every way, not for the purpose of killing

[1] Speech at the Johnson Centenary.

it or wounding it seriously, but apparently out of general cussedness. That, I think, reflects not unfaithfully the Committee stage. Then comes the last and most solemn process of all, when the matador comes into the ring. In one hand he holds the sword for the purpose of killing the bull, and in the other a cloak with which to mislead the bull as to his intentions. And I think I recognise in the noble Marquis opposite (Salisbury) the features of the matador.

The contrast in the treatment of the Bill by the two Houses is very remarkable. The House of Commons lingered over it with a sort of affectionate solicitude. If they saw the slightest danger of its departure they hastily pinned new sheets of amendments to its wings, and it might be said almost that they viewed its appearance and disappearance with equal regret. I do not know anything like it since the occasion when the well-known traveller, Herman Melville, was surrounded by almost every luxury and attention on the island of Tahiti, when nothing was too good for him, and he enjoyed it all, till he found out that it was only preparing him for a meal that was subsequently to take place on his own carcase. But the House of Lords treats this Bill in a very different spirit. . . . Here there are none of the little attentions which distinguished it in the House of Commons. There are no amendments, no instructions to the Committee, no Committee to instruct. I do not know that there is anything which this Bill, in its treatment, so resembles as the old recipe for cooking a pike. You fill the pike with everything that is most rich, rare, and toothsome in quality, and, having done that, you fling the pike out of the window as being of no value at all. This was very humorous conduct of the Tory Party in the House of Commons, and it is not altogether without humour in the House of Lords. But surely your conduct is hardly respectful to your colleagues in the House of Commons. At what a price do you value all their ability, their energy, their time!

"This," said Lord Rosebery, "is not a dissecting room; it is the chamber of death itself." Nevertheless he made an eloquent appeal for consideration of things "much larger than the Bill or than any Bill." They might at least, he said, desist from petty and pitiful personal recrimination.

There is not one of you, my Lords, who in his heart believes that we are Separatists and traitors and place-hunters. There is not one sane member of your Lordships' house who believes in the imputations which are made freely outside on the honesty of our motives. And we, on our side, do not believe that you are statesmen anxious to tyrannise and ride rough-shod over the Irish people, and imbrue your hands in Irish gore.

Then he uttered words which might well have prepared Liberals, if they had troubled to weigh them,

for the complete repudiation of Home Rule which was to come a few years afterwards :

> You may be certain of the infallibility of the course you have pursued or propose to pursue. I may frankly say that *I* am by no means sure of mine. *I* am not certain of anything with regard to Ireland. . . . I say that I am not certain about Ireland ; but I at least say this, that I have come to the conclusion at which I have arrived after a long and painful study—that I have arrived at the convictions which I hold in the teeth of all, or almost all, that would tend to make me take the other side.

If Lord Rosebery was right in describing himself as a witness for Home Rule, he was certainly even more accurate in adding " but not an enthusiastic witness."

CHAPTER XI

THE PREMIERSHIP

Lord Rosebery Forms a Government—His Difficulties with Harcourt and Radical Minority—"Predominant Partner" Speech—Attitude to Harcourt's Finance Bill—Derby Success with Ladas and Nonconformist Criticisms—Resignation—Causes of Failure.

ON THE first day of March 1894, Mr. Gladstone, bent with the weight of eighty-four years, very deaf, very fragile, threatened with loss of sight, the subject of a conspiracy in which his most trusted followers had taken part, and embarrassed on the eve of a new Session by a serious Cabinet disagreement on the subject of naval estimates, went to Windsor to tender his resignation to the Queen. He seems to have had an idea of recommending Lord Spencer as his successor, and had dismissed with some decision John Morley's suggestion that Lord Rosebery was the natural nomination. Whether Gladstone, whose knowledge of men was not generally his shining point, had divined some infirmity in the brilliant Scot, whether he was influenced by considerations of etiquette, or whether he was smitten by one of the sudden jealousies of age for youth, can only be a matter of conjecture. What is certain is that in 1887 he looked on Lord Rosebery as his natural successor, and in 1894 he was ready to pass over his claims. Queen Victoria, however, did not consult Mr. Gladstone. She at once sent for Lord Rosebery, who kissed hands as Prime Minister next day. He had received in the meantime the necessary assurances of support from the Cabinet and almost before it had realised the loss of its old leader the

rank-and-file of Liberalism was presented with the accomplished fact of a Rosebery Government.

It was a Prætorian elevation. The purple was assured to one who knew it must be a fatal gift by men inspired less by loyalty, or affection, or thought of public weal, than by the desire to exclude a domination more distasteful. They were actuated not by confidence in Lord Rosebery, but by dislike of Lord Rosebery's chief rival ; but this motive was of all-sufficient force, and the words " Hail Archibald Augustus " were so impetuously pronounced that the rival himself was compelled in prudence, and out of regard for the unity of the Party, to add his voice to that of the majority.

In setting aside the claims of Sir William Harcourt, left by Mr. Gladstone's disappearance as Liberal Leader in the House of Commons, his fellow Cabinet Ministers could plead only one excuse—that he was impossible. In several ways Sir William was Lord Rosebery's undoubted superior. He could boast vastly more experience in affairs, for long before the young Scottish Peer had made any sort of mark he had held high office with distinction and success. His understanding was solid, his parts were brilliant ; he knew the House of Commons through and through ; he was an excellent debater and tactician ; his platform speaking, though it could not bear comparison with Lord Rosebery's in charm and distinction, was effective ; and he possessed in high measure two great statesmanlike qualities—a perception of the essential and the practicable and an industry unresting and unhasting. In all-round ability no man in the Liberal Cabinet could compare with him; he had sacrificed much for the Party, including some of his own private convictions ; and though he was generally supposed to be not overburdened with scruple, he was at bottom very much more honest, according to his lights, than many Liberals of far higher pretensions. Though politics had made him a comparatively poor man, he cared nothing for money ; he had something more than a negative contempt for honours ; and, unlike some of his colleagues, he stuck to his Party through

fair fortune and foul, never leaving it, in its difficulties, for the study or the race-course.

But with all these qualities went the failure to make the best of them. President Kruger once called Queen Victoria a "difficult woman." Harcourt was certainly a difficult man. Even in his earlier days he was an undocile subordinate and an overbearing colleague. To his chief, after his first rather contemptuous antagonism had been overcome, he yielded a sincere but grumbling loyalty ; to his equals in the Cabinet, he often showed the temper that creates hostility without compelling fear. In the 'nineties, age and disappointment, dissatisfaction with the position of the Party in the country and with his own position in the Party, had exaggerated the natural imperiousness of his temper, while diminishing the gaiety which had partly disguised it in his earlier days. He was, also, out of touch with both the positive tendencies of the Liberalism of the day. Though he gaily declared : "We are all Socialists now," he was too true a Whig, and too convinced a *laissez-faire* economist, to believe in the social reform enthusiasms which the advent of a Labour electorate had prompted in the Liberal Party. Though he had a stout English heart, he clung to the Cobdenite theory of foreign politics, and he saw, much more clearly than most people, that Liberal Imperialism would not do ; if it were Liberal it could not be Imperialistic ; if it were Imperialistic it could not be Liberal. Thus both sides of Lord Rosebery's politics—the Social Reform side and the Imperialistic side—repelled him ; and it so happened that almost every member of the Cabinet was inclined to one side or the other. When Sir William disagreed, he could not refrain from expressing his dissent in a somewhat wounding manner, while his own sensitiveness led him to exaggerate the hostility his words caused. In Mr. Gladstone's last Cabinet he missed, as John Morley has said, "old stable companions," and did not take to the new. He was irritated with the size of the majority, and by no means pleased with the character of the Parliament, with its large

infusion of men indifferent to his own eighteenth-century polish of style. His contempt for "damned nonsense" was profound, and as he classed most political idealism thus, he naturally came into collision with both Imperialists and non-Imperialists. His rages, though violent, were shortlived, and his nature was too large and kindly to let him carry a vendetta to its logical extremity. Thus he succeeded in making himself thoroughly disliked, without being feared, in the Cabinet. It was a feeling common to old members and young, to the moderate as well as the advanced. Lord Rosebery, with Sir William in view, once wrote that a sharp attack of gout would be preferable to "such a Cabinet as we enjoyed yesterday."[1] We find the cheery and placable Marquess of Ripon resenting Harcourt's "blood and thunder." Lord Morley talks, in his euphemistic way, of "daily moods that made him difficult." The frank good-humour of Lord Spencer, the precocious self-possession of Mr. Asquith, were not left entirely unruffled by his wounding satire. He made an enemy of Sir Henry Fowler, and even Mr. Bryce was compelled to admit that here were some things a philosopher could not endure. Against such formidable array of enemies he could count no ally in high position; and at a somewhat later period, when Lord Rosebery's attitude threatened to split the Party, we find the fear of being "handed over body and soul to Harcourt" a main element in the bitterness of his critics. The dread of that fate is expressed with almost comic iteration in the memoirs of the period.

With the leading politicians, therefore, Lord Rosebery was popular in the sense that certain kings have been popular, not so much for his own merits, but because he stood in the way of something worse. In the country there was a rather more positive feeling. So far, after all, Lord Rosebery had done little that could be pointed to as the work of a great statesman. But he had contrived to create a considerable legend, and there was little legend elsewhere in the Liberal Party at that day.

[1] *Life of the Marquess of Ripon* (Lucien Wolf).

Everybody knew exactly what to expect of Sir William Harcourt. John Morley had shown precisely what was and what was not in him. The Spencers, Fowlers, Kimberleys, Herschells, and Bryces gave no suggestion of unfulfilled promise. Lord Rosebery alone conveyed the impression of a future far greater than, and possibly even different in kind from, his past. He had somehow given people to understand that, allowed the opportunity, he was capable of indefinite expansion ; and when he became Prime Minister his words were awaited with an interest which would certainly not have attached to those of any other member of the Cabinet. Indeed, it was not until many years later that hope finally died that he would some day emerge as something very splendid indeed.

His own attitude was one of reluctance, which may possibly have been affected, but which certainly struck most intimates as real. He was the only member of the Cabinet who ostensibly favoured a Harcourt Premiership ; and it is said that, like Cæsar, he thrice refused the offers of his Mark Anthonies. Indeed, the Premiership, with a distracted Party, a hopeless programme, and the near prospect of extinction, was no great prize. Still, there was the old school-boy ambition to satisfy, and it may be questioned whether all this parade of unwillingness was wholly justified by Lord Rosebery's most inward feelings. Of course, had he known all that was to follow, he would no doubt have set aside the " polished perturbation " of supreme office. But for the moment it seemed that the disaffection of which Mr. Henry Labouchere was the centre was neither wide nor deep. Between Mr. Labouchere and Lord Rosebery there was an obscure but (on the part of the former) a bitter feud. Mr. Labouchere conceived that he had to thank Lord Rosebery for the fact that he was not offered a place in 1892. " He told me," wrote the late Mr. Wilfred Scawen Blunt in his *Diaries*, " the whole story of the correspondence with Gladstone about their not asking him to join the Cabinet. 'The best of the joke is,' he said, 'it was not the Queen

at all who prevented it. I arranged with Gladstone to lay it on the Queen, and that he should then lay it on himself. It really was Rosebery. He is an ambitious young man,' said Labouchere, 'and wants to be Prime Minister, playing the part Palmerston formerly played with the help of the Tories against his own Party. We shall have to join against him.' "

It may well be understood that such a grievance, real or fancied, was sufficient to inspire Mr. Labouchere to the attack ; and it is equally easy to infer that a campaign by one who boasted of having "laid on the Queen" something of which Her Majesty was quite innocent was not likely to be distinguished by scruple.

The vendetta against the new Prime Minister was, however, chiefly pursued underground, and when Parliament was called together Lord Rosebery had, to all appearance, a reasonably firm hold both on his Cabinet and on the House of Commons. To a meeting of Liberals on March 12th he declared that, though they missed the "sublime and pathetic presence" of Mr. Gladstone, what had happened was only this—"that in a week we have lost our leader, but the other sixteen of his colleagues still remain, and they are all pledged to the policy that he laid down." But those who knew, of course, saw grave meaning in the remarks which followed an attack on the House of Lords :

> Though I think badly of the House of Lords, I do not go so far as some of my friends, who consider Peers as pariahs. I am not disposed to think that because a man is born to a particular position he should therefore be debarred from the higher opportunities of serving his country. I sympathise entirely, so far as I know them, with the views of a certain deputation which waited on our late Whip (Lord Tweedmouth). I hold that it is a grave inconvenience to the Liberal Party when a Liberal Minister is not in the House of Commons. It is a grave inconvenience—especially to the Prime Minister. But I am not one of those who think he is under a stigma or a bar. I have not so learned the Liberalism in which we were brought up. . . . It is not at this stage of our development that I am prepared to make a new genus of exclusion, to create a fresh disability, and to set up the principle that the accident of birth shall debar a man from reasonable service, and that in future there is to be written over the doors in Downing-street, "No Peer need apply."

The "certain deputation" had consisted of Mr. Labouchere and the comparatively small group of active malcontents. Their wrath was not turned away by Lord Rosebery's soft words, but it was not from them that his chief anxieties were to come. The chief immediate trouble of Lord Rosebery was, indeed, due simply to what partisans might characterise as an imprudence and non-partisans as a candour. During the debate on the Address, Lord Salisbury commented on the omission from the Queen's Speech of any mention of Home Rule. Lord Rosebery replied that Ministers had no wish to shirk the Irish Question, but neither did they conceive it their function to provide Bills merely in order to furnish sport for the House of Lords. Fastening on one observation of Lord Salisbury, he proceeded to a confession in harmony with, but considerably extending, his admission of the previous year :

> I am in entire accord with the noble Lord when he said that before Home Rule could be conceded by the Imperial Parliament, England as the predominant partner would have to be convinced of its justice. That may be a considerable admission to make, since a majority of English members of Parliament elected from England proper are hostile to Home Rule. But I believe the conviction of England depends on one point alone, and that point is the conduct of Ireland herself. I believe that if we can go on showing the comparative absence of agrarian crimes, if we can point to the continued harmony of Ireland with the great Liberal Party of the country, if we can go on giving proofs and pledges that Ireland is entitled to be granted that boon which she has never ceased to demand since the Act of Union was passed—I believe that the conversion will not be of a slow or difficult character.

Mr. John Morley, who had to explain away the speech —not very satisfactorily—to an excited House of Commons, "found R. not particularly agitated, though he knew pretty well that he had been indiscreet. 'I blurted it out,' he said. 'For Heaven's sake,' said I, blurt out what you please about any country in the whole world, civilised or barbarous, except Ireland. Irish affairs are the very last field for that practice.' R.: 'You know that you and I have agreed a hundred times that until England agrees H. R. will never pass.'

J. M. : 'That may be true. The substance of your declaration may be as sound as you please, but not to be said at this delicate moment.'"

It is the author of *Compromise* who writes. One of Lord Rosebery's constant handicaps was that such harmless jesuitry came far from easily to him. It has already been pointed out that want of experience in the House of Commons had left him, among other things, rather dangerously honest. He could, as a matter of theory, grasp the necessity of a common Cabinet opinion which is perhaps the opinion of no one person in that assembly. But it was quite another thing to compel himself to the sacrifice of personal conviction which is implied. He was generally in the position of the one juryman who protests that he never met eleven such obstinate fellows in his life ; and never quite accommodated himself to the demands made on a Liberal statesman of his day by the comprehensive character of the Party appeal. Lord Salisbury, he saw, "thought aloud" ; why should not he ? It was not easy for him to understand that among the many privileges of a Liberal leader such publicity to private reflection was not included. When the Liberal Party was simply Liberal all its statesmen could of course afford to say much what they thought of things, if not of persons, in public as well as in private. But when it became a Party appealing to many separate interests, and even many separate fads, its leaders had to hold themselves sternly in check, lest the commonplaces of the dinner-table should become the sensations of the newspaper placards.

Lord Rosebery, as we have seen, was not constitutionally incapable of using language to conceal his thought ; still less was he incapable of refusing to use language to conceal his want of thought. But though he could sometimes dissemble there was one temptation he could not resist. A pet idea of his very own must out. Lord Rosebery imagined that, having sounded the well of his own thoughts and found (as he believed) truth at the bottom, it was his privilege,

and even his duty, to display the interesting captive in public, though she should be as embarrassing to his modest followers as another Lady Godiva. This disposition was held in check early in life by his reverence for Mr. Gladstone and the natural imitativeness of youth. He then talked, for the most part, the common form of Liberalism, with indulgence to little occasional heresies in which he took pride. As he grew older, however, he thought out many things which he had at first taken for granted, and found an increasing difficulty in suppressing the result of his reflections.

This habit, however honourable, is irritating to good Party men in great difficulties ; and it is not surprising that Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Morley, who had to clear up the mess in the House of Commons, found something not altogether unpleasing in the misfortunes of their noble colleague. Speaking at Edinburgh on March 17th, Lord Rosebery complained that the criticism of his speech has not been " animated by the benevolence which makes criticism tolerable." There was certainly no benevolence, though there was wit and point in Mr. Chamberlain's criticism :

> We have now a Prime Minister who is willing to support Home Rule though he has no faith in its early success. He is willing to disestablish one Church or establish three, as may be more convenient. He is willing to abolish the House of Lords, even at the cost of revolution, though he is himself in favour of a second chamber. There is no change then in policy. But there is a change. . . . Mr. Gladstone was one of those of whom it was sometimes said that his earnestness ran away with his judgment, but Lord Rosebery allows his judgment to be run away with by the earnestness of other people.

The situation, Mr. Chamberlain thought, was too strained to continue. It is indeed marvellous that the disruptive forces at work were so long controlled, and, despite the tendency to blame Harcourt for his attitude, it must be admitted that there were difficulties on the other side. It was natural enough that Lord Rosebery should want to be master of his own Cabinet; but it was equally natural that a statesman of Harcourt's experience and ability should resent any attempt to

exclude him from a voice in the direction of foreign affairs. This immediate difficulty was overcome by a compromise, and Harcourt for a considerable time played the game by appearing in public as if he were totally unaffected by the serious disappointment, and the heavy blow to his pride, which the Rosebery Premiership involved. But it was impossible for him indefinitely to control his temper in private. Within a month of the formation of the new Government we have Lord Rosebery complaining of the ordeal of holding a Cabinet Council, and by the end of the Session even the pretence of friendly relations with Harcourt had dropped.

Sir William manfully faced the enormous burden of the House of Commons leadership with a majority which sometimes sank to eight or ten, and in addition conducted through all its stages the famous Finance Bill which is a landmark in the fiscal history of the country. In this task, as sometimes happens to a Liberal reformer, he encountered the most formidable opposition from his own Party, and especially from his chief. At the time it was freely rumoured that Lord Rosebery had presented a strongly hostile memorandum, that Harcourt had countered it by suggesting a special Cabinet vote, and that the Prime Minister had then withdrawn after some concession on the subject of graduation. This story has been denounced by friends of Lord Rosebery as a malicious invention. All doubt, however, is set at rest by the documents given in Mr. Gardiner's *Life of Sir William Harcourt.* Lord Rosebery objected to the Budget on many grounds. It would lose Liberalism its remaining propertied supporters. It would stimulate opposition, while bringing no new support. It would increase the difficulty of getting adequate subscriptions to Party funds. It would lead to the export of works of art, break up great families, and diminish the amenities, the "variety and richness, and intellectual forces" of British life. "R.'s disquisition," wrote Harcourt to a colleague, "would have been thought extreme in its Toryism by

Lord Eldon." The comment was natural, but inexact. Lord Rosebery argued neither as a Tory nor a Whig. He argued only as a rich man, and so far as concerns questions of this kind his attitude was perfectly consistent throughout his life.

This antagonism on a capital measure naturally did not improve Harcourt's temper ; and in his caustic enlargements on the subject, to all sorts of people who owed Lord Rosebery allegiance, he may have compromised his own dignity. The two men, the one explosive but forgiving, the other both quick to resent and slow to forget, were bound to quarrel. To the Party, despite his chagrin and weariness, Harcourt was completely loyal. But he was unable to persevere in the magnanimous attitude he had at first assumed to the Rosebery succession. Musing on his grievances only made them seem the more intolerable, and he was wanting in all the qualities which enable a disappointed man to forget, to endure, or to dissemble. He could not help showing his wounds, but hated himself for having shown them, and this self-condemnation added fuel to the hot fire of his resentment. Some means of communication there was bound to be between the head of the Government and its chief representative in the House of Commons. But after a few months Lord Rosebery and Sir William met only at the Cabinet Councils which the Prime Minister reckoned as trials of the first magnitude, and the necessary consultations were carried out through an intermediary. Nor were Lord Rosebery's relations much more cordial with several other members of the Government. Some who had welcomed his rule as an alternative to the Harcourt yoke revealed, as soon as that danger was passed, a tendency to question the orthodoxy of the Prime Minister ; not only was his Imperialism attacked, but even his attachment to Free Trade was questioned. Still others, having deliberately declared for a Peer Premier, were annoyed with him for being a Peer, for being a Premier, and for being himself.

The Derby success with Ladas, while momentarily

assisting Lord Rosebery's prestige in the country, involved him in trouble with a large section of the Liberal Party. A year or two before his advent to 10 Downing-street Lord Rosebery had resumed racing, and while he was unsuccessful the immorality of his conduct remained unrebuked. But when Ladas won the Derby of 1894—a success which was repeated by Sir Visto in the next year's race—the vials of Puritan wrath were poured forth. It was in vain that Lord Rosebery protested his respectability. It was in vain that he reminded Nonconformist critics that Cromwell kept racehorses. They could only reply, like the Scottish saint who was told that the Saviour walked in the corn-fields on the Sabbath day, that they did not think the more of Cromwell for that. A year or two later, when out of office, Lord Rosebery, in a spirit of satire, examined the psychology of the matter. At an early age, he said, much too early an age from every point of view, he had conceived the ambition to win the Derby :

> For a quarter of a century I struggled. Sometimes I ran second, sometimes I ran third ; very often I ran last ; but at last the time arrived when I realised the fruition of my hopes. I won the Derby. But what was the result ? I at that time held high office under the Crown. I was immediately attacked from quarters of an almost inspired character for owning race-horses at all. I then made the discovery, which came to me too late in life, that what was venial and innocent in a Secretary of State or a President of the Council was criminal in the First Lord of the Treasury. I do not even know if I ought not to have learned another lesson—that although without guilt or offence I might perpetually run seconds and thirds, or even run last, it became a matter of torture to many consciences if I won.

Lord Rosebery was equally impenitent regarding criticisms of his Imperialism. In October 1894, speaking at the Cutlers' Feast at Sheffield, he declared that " the Party of a small England, of a shrunk England, of a degraded, a neutral, a submissive England, has died." Two days later, at Bradford, he delivered a fierce attack on the House of Lords. In principle, he said, he was a second-chamber man, but if he had

to choose between no second chamber and such a second chamber as the House of Lords he should feel there was "ground for hesitation." The House of Lords was an absolute danger, an invitation to revolution.

This strength of language, coupled with the Prime Minister's pledge to devote himself to a revision of the constitution, somewhat increased Lord Rosebery's standing with the sterner Radicals; but the Cabinet difficulties continued. They related chiefly to the domain of foreign affairs, in which, despite the concordat which had been arrived at in the beginning of Lord Rosebery's reign, important decisions were constantly taken by the Foreign Office without reference to the Cabinet. Lord Rosebery had allotted the Foreign Office to the Earl of Kimberley who, competent but of no great force of character, was bound to be little more than his instrument. In fact the control of foreign affairs, therefore, remained in the Prime Minister's hands. Harcourt had been fully alive to the nature of the case, and had insisted, with the support of certain Ministers who had opposed his elevation to the Premiership, on being consulted as to all important departmental decisions. In practice, however, the arrangement was not respected, and the Foreign Office did what was right in its own eyes. This was the unforgivable sin to a man of Harcourt's passion for constitutional nicety, and he was moreover extremely apprehensive that the Government was pursuing a dangerous foreign policy. His whole attitude was that of protest against a departure from absolute neutrality in relations with foreign powers. "Is there no pie in the world out of which we can manage to keep our fingers?" he asked when the Foreign Office expressed objection to the cession of the Liau-tung Peninsula to Japan. These objections were made with his habitual pungency and were met with corresponding acerbity.

While indeed there was ample ground, in political differences alone, for the quarrel between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the

peculiar bitterness of the feud can only be explained by a personal aversion. Both came to dislike each other vehemently. But apparently this dislike was a very late growth with Harcourt. His early attitude to Lord Rosebery was one of warm and almost fatherly affection ; later, though a little satirical, and possibly a little scornful of the Scottish noble as something less than the ideal Party man, he was quite friendly ; and even so recently as the early part of 1894 he seems to have been as cordial as a fundamental divergence of political view would allow. What, then, happened to explain the cold fury of the one and the hot fury of the other ? Probably nothing more serious, in the first place, than Harcourt's manner and his incapacity to humour the younger man's rather excessive sense of his own dignity. Harcourt was a very sturdy Englishman ; Lord Rosebery a very touchy and punctilious Scot ; and the one probably got on the other's nerves very much as Hotspur did on Glendower's and vice versa. Harcourt thought very lightly of the importance of a nobleman, but had a sufficiently high notion of his own importance as an English gentleman of old lineage. Lord Rosebery, on the other hand, while complaining bitterly of being denied the privileges of a commoner, was not inclined to part with any of the deference due to the fifth of a line of Scottish Earls. For, as was suggested, there is no Lord so lordly as a Scottish Lord, and Lord Rosebery of all persons was the most prone to resent off-hand treatment. Harcourt's candours were galling to the English members of the Cabinet. But they generally protested, and on protest Harcourt generally softened. Lord Rosebery, with his Scottish pride, would neither warmly protest nor frankly forgive.

On the eve of the session of 1895 matters became so acute that the Prime Minister resolved to resign, and was only dissuaded by the earnest entreaties of colleagues who, whatever their loyalty to him, saw that his departure must bring down the Government. His position was indeed in every way tragic. His

vigour was undermined by a return of the insomnia from which absorption in Foreign Office work had temporarily rescued him, and an attack of influenza early in the spring left him extremely weak. It was not until the midsummer that he really recovered, and he was depressed by the deaths of two old friends—Prebendary Rogers, who had officiated at his marriage, and Professor Blackie, with whom he had often appeared on Scottish platforms. His part in politics was therefore less considerable than in the previous year, and it was perhaps lack of propinquity which permitted him to pay, at the National Liberal Club on May 8th, a tribute to the "indefatigable and brilliant leader of the House of Commons," that same Sir William Harcourt, with whom he had long declined to deal except through a third party.

When in June 1895, the Government was defeated on the cordite amendment, the haste with which Lord Rosebery resigned testified to his desire to be rid of an impossible position. "There are two supreme pleasures in life," he has written.[1] "One is ideal, the other is real. The ideal is when a man receives the seals of office from his Sovereign. The real pleasure comes when he hands them back." In this case there was nothing to qualify the joy of renunciation. At best office is a slavery redeemed only by the gratifying sense that its holder has power to do something worth doing that nobody else can do. Lord Rosebery had endured the slavery without enjoying the power. He had been consoled by no hearty loyalty; he had been wounded by some extremely hearty hatreds; he had suffered, while he had also inflicted, the extremity of humiliation; and neither his temper nor his health had been such as to enable him to bear the strain with cheerfulness or fortitude.

Part of the trouble may have been due to his own idiosyncrasies; much was certainly owing to the rancour of some colleagues and the lukewarmness of others; but in the main his misery was the necessary consequence

[1] In his monograph on Sir Robert Peel.

of his position. Proud and confident concerning his abilities, he wanted to be a real leader. But he wanted, also, to lead his Party against its inclinations. Long impatient with certain Gladstonian tendencies, he desired, now that Mr. Gladstone was gone, to wean Liberalism from what he regarded as its detriments and liabilities. It must no longer be open to the reproach of Little Englandism. It must not be pre-occupied with merely political reforms. It must look abroad to the consolidation and unification of the Empire. At home it must forestall and defeat Socialism by a sort of prophylactic treatment ; there must be a Social reform vaccination to get rid of the danger of a Communistic small-pox. Similarly the House of Lords must be converted into a semi-representative Senate, in order not to assist, but to delay and prevent revolution.

In other words, Lord Rosebery was really an intelligent Conservative, bent on getting the substance at some sacrifice of the appearances ; but, being separated from Conservatism as it existed by those Scottish peculiarities which have been noted, his only instrument was the Liberal Party, tied to Home Rule, and encumbered with a number of pledges which must alienate the heartier kind of working-man. His aim, which was to cut away these commitments, and come out with a programme not unlike the "Tory Democracy" of Lord Randolph Churchill, could no doubt have been accomplished by a great popular statesman, with a firm control of the House of Commons, and the power of generating enthusiasm among masses of men.

But Lord Rosebery was not that kind of statesman, and he was not in that kind of position. He had no sort of hold on the House of Commons. He was served in it by men who were in extreme cases bitterly hostile and at the best tepid and critical. Nor had he the gifts of a great democratic leader. He could hold an audience interested, and even charmed, but he could not thrill it. He could win the respect of the more

thoughtful type of working-man, largely because he himself respected that type, and paid it the compliment of taking it seriously. He could earn more than the respect of a few middle-class intellectuals, who delighted in a style which was easy without being undignified, and in a refinement which bore no trace of pedantry. He was long specially worshipped by the kind of Liberal who is always a little afraid that he is on the wrong side socially. But he was temperamentally incapable of making himself such a power as Mr. Chamberlain already was and Mr. Lloyd George was to be. He lectured his audiences ; he stood always on a higher platform than the thing of joists and planks—on the platform of his peerage, his pedigree, and his intellectual distinction.

"Lord Rosebery," said a contemporary critic, "struck me chiefly as a gentleman who fared sumptuously every day," and there was a certain point in the gibe. Small things betrayed that peremptoriness of his disposition, never corrected by rough-and-tumble contact with his fellows, which accounted so largely for his failure to get on with colleagues. "I have never seen anyone so spoilt as Lord Rosebery," observes a lady,[1] who proceeds to declare that at a house party in Scotland everybody was kept waiting until he had made up his mind if he would go stalking or not, by which time it was generally too late for sport. In politics he was certainly the spoiled favourite of fortune. Decisively, and with perfect breeding, he left the hard, unpleasant work of Party propaganda to others. It was little use asking him to fulfil an emergency engagement. He disliked making himself cheap, and demanded a certain submissiveness from his colleagues, from the Party organisers, and even from his audiences. In speaking he never let his hearers forget that they were listening, not only to an eminent statesman, but to a grandee of innumerable quarterings. Seldom condescending to a joke, he was not without the gift of making laughter, but his own face always remained at

[1] *Memories and Base Details* (Lady Angela Forbes).

its severest in the midst of general merriment, and it was clear to every observant person at his meetings that he was quite devoid of the spirit which accepts, with cheerful sincerity or artful dissimulation, a temporary equality with the audience. Mr. Chamberlain or Mr. Lloyd George would welcome a certain amount of horse-play as giving them an opportunity for that impromptu repartee which public gatherings love. Lord Rosebery regarded the "voice" with a grim disapproval, and if it persisted he would signify his feelings in downright fashion. Nothing but a sense of the dignity of the occasion prevented him breaking forth when, at the dinner of the Imperial Press Congress at the White City in 1909, the fireworks outside interrupted the thread of his discourse. This was, indeed, an extraordinary trial to an orator charged with a solemn task. But much lighter inconveniences were borne with little patience. "I wish you would not interrupt me," he said to a member of his audience at Ipswich in 1888; "it breaks the current of my thought, and will prevent me finishing my speech." Some thirty years later he uttered a similar protest in regard to a quite friendly interruption at a recruiting meeting at Linlithgow.

In both cases, however, he resumed at precisely the point he had broken off and without taking the smallest advantage of the interruption. Indeed, though he was usually described as a great orator, he was rather the impressive declaimer of pieces of literature, and it was only his magnificent voice which lent some illusion of fire and passion. All important speeches are, of course, written, and the manuscript of some notable efforts shows where the orator expected "loud cheers" or cries of "shame," while occasionally there is evidence that he has thought out in the study a "slip" which would provoke correction and give him the opportunity of an "impromptu" retort. But the true demagogue is always equal to an emergency, and takes frank delight in it. Lord Rosebery was no demagogue and, however he might affect reverence for an ideal

democracy, he invariably resented the smallest liberty on the part of democracy in the concrete.

In his sketch of Sir Robert Peel, Lord Rosebery has given an impressive summary of the limitations of a Prime Minister. "The Prime Minister," he wrote, "is . . . the influential foreman of an executive jury. His power is mainly personal, the power of individual influence. That influence, whatever it may be, he has to exert in many directions before he can have his way. He has to deal with the Sovereign, with the Cabinet, with Parliament, with public opinion—all of them potent factors in their various kinds and degrees. To the popular eye, however, heedless of these restrictions, he represents universal power ; he is spoken of as if he has only to lay down his views of policy and adhere to them. That is very far from the case. A first Minister has only the influence with the Cabinet which is given him by his personal argument, his personal qualities, and his personal weight. All his colleagues he must convince, some he may have to humour, some even to cajole, a harassing and ungracious task. Nor is it only his colleagues that he has to deal with ; he has to masticate their pledges given before they joined him, he has to blend their public utterances, to fuse as well as may be all this into the policy of the Government, for these various records must be reconciled, or glossed, or obliterated. A machinery liable to so many grains of sand requires obviously all the skill and vigilance of the best conceivable engineer. . . . That it works well, on the whole, is a tribute less to the institution itself than to the capacity of our race to make any conceivable institution work."

Such are the difficulties of any man who is called upon to control a British Government. They are great enough when every part of the machine works with tolerable smoothness. They are formidable indeed when there exists any considerable element of disharmony, either personal or political. They are hopelessly crushing when both personal and political differences are acute. Personal cordiality may sometimes prevail

against a considerable difference of opinion. A strong common conviction may often keep mutual dislikes within bounds. But when, as in the case of the Rosebery Administration, there is both incompatibility of view and personal antagonism, there is but one remedy. The marriage which has neither interest nor affection to sustain it is best dissolved, and the sooner the better. Much of the trouble which dogged the Liberal Party during the next few years might have been saved if, instead of so much "mastication of pledges," there had been a straightforward measure of divorce.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIGHT FOR A NEW LIBERALISM

Lord Rosebery's Attitude to Politics—Desire to Retain Leadership and Change the Spirit of the Liberal Party—Defence of his Government—Suggested Campaign against the Lords—Their Resentment and its Effects on his Spirit.

EVEN COMPARATIVELY early in his career, it was one of Lord Rosebery's weaknesses to talk frequently about being, or being about to be, "done with public life." He was a little like Dumas's Aramis. Who can read that glorious chapter in which the wounded musketeer is closeted with the Jesuit and the parish priest without acquitting M. l'Abbé of conscious insincerity? How he glorified in the subtleties of the holy father, how patiently he received the trite exhortations of the rustic *curé*, how meekly he pocketed the rebuke about regretting the devil! Aramis was firmly convinced for the moment, there is no doubt, that the military life was a delusion, and that true happiness could only be found in the cloister. But then came d'Artagnan swaggering in with a Gascon oath, an invitation for dinner, and the news that there was a good horse waiting below and an amiable Marie Michon impatient but a few leagues off. The Jesuit's work was undone in a moment, and Aramis lived to fight for many a long day.

The trouble with Aramis was the trouble with Lord Rosebery. We know how Aramis did at last take the plunge, and definitely enter the Church. But even as Bishop and General of the Jesuits, he could not leave the sword, and still more uncanonical things, alone. He could see no bully without pinking him, and no

pretty woman without ogling her. So with Lord Rosebery. After talking for years about retiring to his "roosting-place at Barnbougle," and spending the rest of his years in the solace of literature and family life, he did actually get outside of all regimented politics. But he could never resist the temptation of a little private war, or the fascination of a secret political amour.

The writings of a literary politician are generally valuable for the autobiographical hints that they contain, and Lord Rosebery's are no exception. In his introduction to the *Windham Papers*, published in 1913, he makes certain remarks on the character of a half-forgotten celebrity which might, without much violence, be applied to his own. William Windham, he says, was in oratory, in Parliament, in Society, almost supreme ; yet he can hardly be said to survive, as he left no stamp, no school, no work. What were the explanations of this fame and this sterility ? Lord Rosebery finds that Windham's prime quality was independence, "at once the choicest and the least serviceable of all qualities in political life." Independence in a public man, he proceeds, is a quality as splendid as it is rare, "but it is apt to produce and develop acute angles. Now a colleague with acute angles is a superfluous discomfort. And independence in a great orator on the Treasury Bench is a rocket of which one cannot predict the course."

Windham, he finds, was not formed by nature for a politician in a country where Party rules the roost.

> We will go a step farther, and hazard the opinion that his heart was never in politics at all. He loved mathematics, he loved the classics, he loved reading, he loved country life ; but for Parliament he had no natural propensity. From his first contact with politics in Ireland he instinctively shrank. His self-conscious, self-tormenting nature was indeed wholly unsuited for public life. *But he loved oratory. From the moment when he found that he wielded that rare power over his fellow-men he delighted in exercising it.*

We have here a good deal of Lord Rosebery himself. He was very self-conscious and a little self-tormenting. He was swayed by a multiplicity of loves and ambitions,

and weakened by some tendency to self-indulgence, one symptom of which would, by a deferential critic, be distinguished as high independence, for in truth much that is so dignified is merely a form of luxury. Men who are forced to work with other men soon learn to draw a line, not intolerably untrue, between essential integrity and mere fussiness ; they are not always inquiring how many grains of sand constitute a heap, or whether a man can be a democrat without believing in the latest system of proportional representation. It is not that they misprise the " virtues belonging to the noble family of truth," as Macaulay has it, but that they know that, in an imperfect world, the attempt to be perfect will defeat itself. The worst inconsistencies are those of the consistent ; there is none so unfair as the man who pretends, however sincerely, to complete impartiality ; and the most truly dependent of all human beings is the very rich man who vaunts an independence which prevents his giving a fair return for his keep. It would be quite unjust to class Lord Rosebery with one who left " no stamp, no school, no work." He left all three. But the stamp would have been deeper, the school more fertile and permanent, the work greater and more enduring if it had not been that, as he says of Windham, " his cherished independence led to a morbid craving for isolation." These words are too strong, indeed, for his case, for the centrifugal tendency was balanced by a yearning desire for sympathy and comradeship ; witness his rather melancholy remark to John Morley that people would not " come and talk freely to him," when he was "in every morning at Lansdowne House." No man enjoyed better converse with selected specimens of his race ; none could be on occasion pleasanter in general society ; none could be kinder to young ambition and ability when they approached him at the right moment and in the right manner. But if the mood for isolation should come it was indulged with complete disregard to other interests, until the next impulse to activity and gregariousness.

But the most significant passage in this dissection of Windham is that which begins : " But he loved oratory." Lord Rosebery was not without a " natural propensity to Parliament." He had one or two very deep and genuine enthusiasms. He loved, when he felt like it, the excitement of fight. While he might resent some of the concomitants of popularity he had a keen relish of popularity itself. We cannot take too seriously his frequent complaints of the fierce light that beats on the political leader, " followed out of doors by the reporter, pursued in the seclusion of his home by the interviewer, his conscience kept for him by a number of other people, his whole life a hurricane of which the essential quality is publicity." When he spoke with contempt of " puffing and being puffed," of " all the little devices, the scattered portraits, the carefully announced hours of departure and arrival, all the little stimulants to mechanical enthusiasm so much in vogue," he did not mean that he himself was immune from the last infirmity of the noble mind. When he asked : " Have men who work for the public no right to retirement and repose ? " and complained that the public wanted to know everything about the private life of a public man " from the moment he rises in the morning to the moment he goes to bed at night," he meant merely that he would have preferred all the advantages of the eighteenth century combined with all those of the twentieth—a very intelligent preference, too, if it could only be realised. It is not to be supposed that he would have tolerated public life so long if he had not enjoyed the sense of power and importance it gives. Office is not, as Lord Rosebery said, an acquired taste, like " absinthe, or opium, or cod liver oil " ; the wish to exercise power is, perhaps unfortunately, almost as natural and universal as the desire for food or love.

But it is probably true that among all the allurements of the political life the strongest in Lord Rosebery's case was the opportunity it afforded for the exercise of the gift of which he was justly proud. No man

could have his voice, his presence, his sense of words, his wit, his easy power of rounded period and imaginative appeal without wanting to use it. A youth of twenty-four does not venture into a grave company of elders, a rather tired man of sixty does not exchange his easy chair for a platform, unless he has keen zest for the business and for the applause it earns. Lord Rosebery was perhaps not a born statesman. But he was a born orator, or perhaps we should rather say preacher. While it would not be true to say of him that his "glory of words" was the chief fact about him, it would not be so false to say it was the most decisive. Had he loved other things as he loved oratory he would never have retired to the "withered branch," there still to indulge his passion for didactic speech.

In spite, therefore, of his talk in 1892 of abandoning politics, we may be sure that he had no definite intention of being altogether "done with public life," though he may very well have thought that there was no special attraction in the prospect then existing, and might have preferred temporary independence and isolation. In 1895, on the other hand, he was distinctly interested. At the time of his resignation nothing was farther from his mind than retirement or even separation from the Liberal Party. The Premiership he was thankful to relinquish, but to the leadership he clung with considerable tenacity. During the election campaign he spoke, not only as one having authority, but with greater vivacity and vigour than he had shown for some years. He boasted of his late Government that, far from being a "wretched Government, that thought of nothing but clinging to office," it was everything a Government should be, leaving aside the little matter of an adequate majority.

"There is nothing to defend," he said at the Albert Hall, on July 5, 1895:

> Nothing in its life, nothing in its death, nothing in its spirit, nothing in its work. It lived a noble life. It died a noble death. It passed great measures; it wrought great acts of administration. It leaves behind it a mighty surplus; it leaves business reviving and commerce

prospering. It leaves behind it a contented people. . . . I am told, vaguely, that the policy of the new Government is to be the maintenance of the Empire. In that case, why did they turn us out? We maintained the Empire; we increased the Empire.

This is not the language of a politician hopeless either of his own future or of that of his Party; and it is the more significant because Lord Rosebery seldom succeeded in keeping out of his speeches some indication of his moods. It may be fairly assumed, therefore, that at this time he was not only determined to remain leader, but that he had high hopes of leading a Party converted to his own way of thinking on all important questions. Superficially there was, indeed, every justification for such confidence. Granted that the state of the Party was not satisfactory, that its discipline was impaired, that its spirit had been somewhat quenched by adversity, that it was weakened by serious divisions and personal quarrels, still Lord Rosebery could remember far worse troubles. He could recall, as one of his earliest political recollections, the distracted period during which Lord Hartington had led the Front Opposition Bench. To most people, including so shrewd a politician as Harcourt, it then seemed that Gladstone's great career had seen its tame and almost undignified conclusion. Only a few exceptional observers like himself, who had never doubted the veteran's return, continued to look to Hawarden for a sign. But when the time came it needed but a few speeches in Midlothian to wreck the towering structure of Disraelian Imperialism, and consign the Conservative Party to the shallows and miseries in which Lord Hartington had floundered.

With such a precedent, why should he despair of a revival at least equally rapid and complete? Gladstone was an old man when he won the 1880 election. Lord Rosebery was still only forty-seven, in the very prime of his powers, and with possibly the best part of a quarter of a century of activity before him. His constitution was good at bottom, despite a few annoying weaknesses; he had no rival in natural ability, if

practical faculty and intellectual endowment were both taken into account, for he was a better man of business than John Morley, and a more interesting speaker than Sir William Harcourt. A few years must dispose of any claims founded on mere experience. It was chiefly the older statesmen who showed themselves critical of his Imperialism and pseudo-Socialism ; with the men who were to represent Liberalism in the future, men like Asquith, Grey, and Haldane, he was on excellent terms. Nothing should seem more probable than that, in five or six years, Lord Rosebery might find himself at the head of a firmly united Liberal Party, free from the Irish entanglement, safe from the reproach of Gladstonian foreign policy, "progressive" at home, strongly Imperialistic abroad. That he entertained this design in 1895 seems certain, and that he did not finally relinquish it till nearly ten years later is probable. The whole history of the intervening period teems with evidence of intrigues to secure the predominance of the Imperialistic wing, and with it the supreme authority of Lord Rosebery. They were defeated not by the modesty or reluctance, but merely by the impracticable temper, of one to whose rich gifts patience and self-control had not been added.

Lord Rosebery's election lead of concentration on the House of Lords, "the tap-root of all political questions," was not followed. Sir William Harcourt in particular pointedly ignored his deprecation of a "multifarious programme," and took his own course. This flouting of his authority determined Lord Rosebery, after the full extent of the Liberal misfortune at the polls was made manifest, that in no circumstances would he meet Sir William in council again, or assume responsibility for any word or action of that statesman. The decision was conveyed in a written intimation so direct, and indeed arrogant, in its terms that it made impossible, as was doubtless its intention, any sort of accommodation. Harcourt was told, in so many words, that he must either resign, or be regarded as the leader of a schism. The utmost address of the

most skilled mediators failed to make the smallest impression on Lord Rosebery's resolution, and for a time there were virtually two kings in the Liberal Brentford. The lot of the Opposition hostess of those days was far from happy. A public rupture may be painful, but people know what to do about it. But when one leader privately excommunicates the other, and yet both pretend in public that nothing is happening, second sight has to be added to matchless tact if the social harmonies are to be preserved.

Lord Rosebery's argument for a campaign against the Peers was simple. With an unreformed House of Lords, he urged, nothing could be done except by a series of hurricanes :

> Say a Government comes in with five first-class measures. There is one hurricane to support the first. Is it in human nature that there should be a second, a third, a fourth, and a fifth to support the remaining four ? The question of the House of Lords must therefore be put first. The Liberal Party ought to hold by all its pledges, but it should place confidence in its leaders as to when, as to how, and as to the order in which those pledges should be redeemed. We want in future a little air, a little elbow-room.

At Bradford, where he had elaborated his view, some time before the election, he dwelt especially on the injustice to Scotland and Wales involved in the constitution of the House of Lords. The tone of these references emphasises the point made above that, while Lord Rosebery always felt as a good Briton, he approached every subject in which Scotsmen and Englishmen were equally interested from the standpoint of the smaller country. Comparing the House of Lords to the Roman Emperors who bought, by submission to their Prætorians, the right of dealing as they chose with their more distant provinces, he said :

> The misfortune of that is this, that it produces a feeling of neglect and of differential treatment as between Scotland and Ireland and Wales which is itself a great danger and a dissolvent of your Empire. . . . You must remember this, that this House, which contains five per cent. of Liberals and 95 per cent. of another Party, rules Scotland, which sympathises with the five per cent. ; Wales, which sympathises with the five per cent. ;

Ireland which sympathises with the five per cent.; and England, which, except on the question of Home Rule, does, I believe, in fact and in practice, sympathise with the five per cent. also. . . . What a mockery is this! We boast of our free institutions. We swell as we walk abroad and survey less fortunate countries. We make broad the phylacteries of freedom upon our foreheads. We thank God that we are not as other less-favoured men, and all the time we endure this mockery of freedom. You are bound hand and foot. You may vote and vote till you are black in the face, it will not change things at all; still the House of Lords will control at its will the measures of your representatives.

Ill as he thought of the House of Lords, vehemently as he had denounced the excessive creation of Peers, Lord Rosebery had not left office without adding to the numbers of the Upper Chamber. For this seeming inconsistency he was violently attacked, but the incident is chiefly interesting as illustrating the difficulty of making a stand on principle in such a matter. Lord Rosebery, it seems, had "rather hoped to avoid" making any Peers, not because he had any objection in the abstract, but because he had been so intimately associated with attacks on the House of Lords. But his hands were bound in two cases, in regard to which Mr. Gladstone had stated that the honour of the Party was pledged. Two other Peerages he had himself promised if he ever submitted a list, and when he found himself compelled to submit Mr. Gladstone's nominees that promise had to be implemented. So strong is the Party machine; so weak is a Party chief, even though he has made a "silent rule" to make practice fit profession. Lord Rosebery was a little pathetic in confessing the superiority of circumstances. But he hotly denied that a farthing had been received for any of the Peerages. "We of the Liberal Party," he said, in a spirit of large faith, "do not traffic in titles in that way."

All this was no doubt perfectly sincere, but, however inevitable such contrast between speech and action may be, the Liberal Party stands to lose by it. On the larger question it may be doubted whether Lord Rosebery was justified in his conviction that, if the lead against the House of Lords had been vigorously followed at

this time, it would have been rewarded by conspicuous success. To produce a conflagration of the kind he had in mind, fire from heaven is not the only requisite. The heather must also be dry. Whatever the quality of the Roseberian thunderbolts, there was no such mass of combustible material as to suggest the certainty of a satisfactory blaze. The House of Lords might be an irrational body, but in practice it had not at this time shown itself unreasonable. It had condemned the Home Rule Bill ; but that had already been condemned by the British elector, and but coolly commended by Lord Rosebery himself. On the other hand, the Peers had submitted meekly to the direst blow at the landed class, dealt by Sir William Harcourt's Finance Act, and had assumed to other Liberal measures an attitude, critical indeed and unfriendly, but not utterly arrogant. Lord Salisbury had laughed at the Parish Council as inferior to a circus as a means of brightening village life—and who shall say that he was not right?—but he had not counselled the destruction of the Parish Councils Bill. There was, in short, no popular grudge against the House of Lords just then, and there was a quite popular grudge against the Liberal Party, as Sir William Harcourt, unseated at Derby by the explosion of working-class feeling against Local Veto, was in a position to testify.

Barren in positive result, Lord Rosebery's onslaught on the Lords was not without its effect on his own career. It strengthened the conviction of his fellow Peers that he was the inveterate, pertinacious, and determined enemy of their order ; and henceforth the discomfort he had always felt was greatly increased. Lord Rosebery's parliamentary speeches at all times were eloquent of the effect produced on a luxurious and sun-loving nature by the coldness of the Upper Chamber. Time and again he dilated on the depressing influence of a House in which, in ordinary circumstances, a dozen or two elderly noblemen exchange politely frigid commonplaces, while on great occasions, as many

as five hundred Lords will be ranged on one side of the Woolsack, while on the other " you will see, sprinkled on the great ocean of red benches, some miserable twenty or thirty Peers." When to this inevitable desolation of a Liberal Peer leader is added the consciousness of a special personal hostility, it must be a strong nature indeed that remains unaffected. It required some courage for Lord Rosebery to confront, after his Premiership, the hereditary legislators whom he had attacked and derided as unfit for their functions. Such courage Lord Rosebery had, and a contemporary observer has left on record his tribute to the nonchalant coolness with which he faced the music. But this fortitude was very unlike stolidity, and it entailed a heavy cost. It is not in human nature to flourish in a continuously unfriendly atmosphere, and it was least of all in Lord Rosebery's nature. He could no doubt have put up with much hostility if he had been supported by a compensating warmth of partisanship. Isolated in his own House, and bereft as he soon was of any decided moral support outside, he withered rapidly into pessimism and sterility. The urbanity which had once disguised and mitigated certain defects of temperament did not survive the late 'nineties ; and we are conscious of a settled bitterness which even the experiences of his Premiership had failed immediately to produce.

For a time, however, he made a gallant fight. He seemed, indeed, to be unaware of the extent to which the defeated Party attributed its disasters to his leadership, and proceeded on the assumption that his own recipe of concentration on Imperialism was welcome. In this illusion he dealt in rather a lecturing tone with the causes of Liberal failure. He blamed his followers, he blamed the electorate, he blamed the length of the Liberal programme. He complained of the time spent on comparatively small portions of the United Kingdom—Wales and Ireland. He insisted on the necessity of the Imperial spirit. Much of this criticism was no doubt justified, but there was a certain lack of

tact, in view of the position of the orator, in telling a sore man that, if he had been badly worsted, his own stupidity was responsible. The Liberal Party wanted the poultice of silence. Lord Rosebery gave it " blows of sound."

CHAPTER XIII

RESIGNATION OF LEADERSHIP

Feud between Imperialism and Little Englanders—A Profound Divergence —The Armenian Massacres—Mr. Gladstone Intervenes—Lord Rosebery's Decision to Retire—Complaints of Lack of Support—His Veneration for Mr. Gladstone and its Influence on his Career.

"A POLITICAL PARTY," says Lord Morley, "is at the same time the roughest, and one of the most delicate, of human machines. Ever so slight a new personal element suffices at the shortest notice to awaken suspicions, preferences, exclusions, exaggerations, bits of small malice, all multiplied daily and swollen in geometric progression by gossip."

Lord Rosebery put the same matter (for Lord Morley's reference is to his resignation of the Liberal leadership) more briefly when he declared that "young Harcourt had upset his apple-cart," meaning that his position had been rendered impossible by intrigue on behalf of, if not actually countenanced by, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is now necessary to trace the course of events which, leading Lord Rosebery into acute difference with Mr. Gladstone, decided him to step down from his uneasy throne. But, as usual, the story is comparatively pointless, and even incomprehensible, without some reference to facts, hidden from the newspaper readers of the time, which made this slight "new personal element" decisive.

Ever since 1892 there had been a serious schism in the Liberal Party. It had been partially concealed, and kept from extending, by the necessity of carrying on, but the moment restraint was removed by the defeat of 1895, the two hostile factions sprang apart, and a

war of mining and sapping began. We have seen that Lord Rosebery, profiting by the necessities of Mr. Gladstone, had insisted, as a condition of taking the Foreign Office, on something like a free hand. A free hand for Lord Rosebery implied an Imperialistic policy for Liberalism. But there was an element in the Cabinet—it may have been a numerical minority, but it included several of the most important Ministers—to whom Imperialism was anathema.

The so-called Little Englander was not a person who desired that England should sink to the position of a third-rate Power. The use of the phrase as a term of reproach, with the ill-judged language of particular Little Englanders, has obscured the simple fact that the despised person to whom it was applied in the 'nineties, and later, was merely a follower of the revered Manchester School philosophers of the earlier nineteenth century.

The Little Englander's ideals may be summarised as government without direction, trade without dominion, supremacy without war, amity without alliance. His faith was that the best of all possible worlds could be attained by letting the natural faculties of individuals and nations operate with the smallest measure of interference. Domestic prosperity was best assured by leaving each man to do the best for himself, and securing him in the enjoyment of the highest possible percentage of the fruits of his labour. From this main proposition proceeded all the maxims of Liberalism. There must be, at once or by easy stages, an abolition of every kind of privilege, every artificial handicap or disability, which interfered with the free play of natural faculty ; hence the constant demand for more and more political reform, for improved and free education, for the reform of the land laws, and so forth. Government must restrict itself to the punishment of offences, the enforcement of contracts, and such work as private enterprise could not perform ; taxation must be kept low, as every deduction from private profit meant a discouragement of private activity ; to keep taxation low the nation must avoid all courses calculated to lead to war, the most

fertile mother of expense ; and the best means of avoiding war were first to keep the fighting forces down to an unprovocative level, and secondly, to show the outside world that Great Britain was rather dissatisfied with having too much territory than anxious to acquire more. That greed of trade might be a provoking cause as well as greed of territory did not enter into the Little Englander's contemplation. For it was an axiom of the Manchester School that there could not be too much trade, that trade benefited everybody, and that every nation must be and know itself the better for the prosperity of every other nation.

We know now that the Manchester School erred, not so much on the side of that hardness of heart with which it is usually credited, but on the side of an excessive faith in the goodness of human nature left to itself. It forgot that if a poor man and a rich man are allowed to compete on perfectly level terms the poor man will go under. It overlooked the fact that, in a " fair field," the tares may do better than the wheat. It might be right in disputing the old maxim of *Si vis pacem, para bellum ;* it was again and again wrong in asserting the converse. It might be right in believing that, in a world converted to substantially Free Trade, foreign countries would be as good customers as politically attached Dominions ; it was deceived when it imagined that the world would in fact come to substantially Free Trade. It suffered, to speak more generally, from a very common illusion. While it loved to talk about evolution, it believed that, for all practical purposes, evolution had ceased. The thing which was in the time of John Stuart Mill was, in all essentials, the thing that must be. There would be progress, of course—belief in progress was unbounded—but it must be progress on familiar lines. Banks would become bigger, but there would always be competing banks. Industrial and trading concerns would grow, but they would always be fighting each other, and their efforts to get customers would always keep up quality and keep down price. Trade unions would doubtless become more powerful

and better organised, but there would still be the old adjusting influence of the competition of the workers for employment, and of the masters for labour. There was no conception of the possibility of a Westminster Bank, of a Coats or Lever or Imperial Tobacco Trust, or of a Labour Triple Alliance. Nobody guessed the development of such Governmental organisation of trade as that which made Germany an economic menace to the world. Even the rough hints given by Bismarck in three successive wars of conquest were very imperfectly understood. The new German Empire was, indeed, almost welcomed as an assurance of political stability on the Continent. It was not comprehended that, without conquest, a single Power might, for its own purposes, sway the military power of sixty million people beyond its frontiers.

Lord Rosebery had seen, sooner than any other Liberal of the first rank, some, though not all, of the things which were changing the world. His remedy for the growing strain on the industrial system was, as far as can be judged from his rather vague references, not unlike the "social reform" of Mr. Lloyd George which he so vehemently criticised at a later period. His remedy for the increasing liabilities abroad was a consolidation of the Empire. Both policies were equally incongruous with Manchester School conceptions, but Imperialism was far more obnoxious than social reform. For, while the sternest Free Trader might admit the desirability, for practical electoral purposes, of some adulteration of the pure milk of the Cobdenite word, there was apparently nothing, not even platform popularity, to be got out of Imperialism. For whatever else might be said about it, Imperialism was expensive. Whether it took the form of "pegging out new claims," or of placing a fiscal ring fence round the Empire, or of perfecting its organisation for defence, or even of strengthening the political ties between the Mother Country and the Dominions, it was in a sense a challenge to the non-British world. That meant heavier insurance against war, high taxation, and wholesale destruction

to Manchester ideals generally. To the Little Englander, Imperialism was practically objectionable because every new experiment in it meant certain expense for an uncertain profit, because each adventure meant a fresh liability, and because each attempt to insure a new liability increased, by its provocation to other Powers, the necessary insurance on all the old liabilities. To him also Imperialism was sentimentally objectionable because it conflicted with the old Liberal idea expressed by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman when he declared that self-government was better than good government, and by another Liberal when he said that no race of men was good enough to have power over another.

There was thus a fundamental difference of opinion to confirm, and in a sense to sanctify, the personal discords, which, smouldering from 1892, blazed into flame as soon as the uneasy interlude of Liberal office without power was over. Lord Rosebery could hold, with satisfaction to himself, that in declining reconciliation with Sir William Harcourt, he was fighting the battle of a truer Liberalism, a Liberalism better adjusted to the necessities of the time, than that which the last of the Whigs represented. Sir William Harcourt, on his side, could persuade himself that any rancour he might feel on personal grounds was pure public spirit, since he was trying to defeat an attempt to rob Liberalism, in the interests of one man's hobby, and the ambitions of his followers, of its very soul. There were, in short, again to quote Lord Morley, "honest differences of political leaning," and a "profound divergence of policy, aim, and temper in Imperial affairs." These alone must have produced in time an open rupture. But the rupture, when it came, was aggravated by personal exasperations, and Lord Rosebery retired with a bitterness which defeated all attempts to bring him back to the Liberal fold. For years he was, despite his claim to be "outside the profession of politics," not unwilling to lead the Party. But after his experiences between 1895 and 1898, it must be as a conqueror, and not as a reconciled equal.

When there is a disposition to make trouble pretexts are not hard to find. As early as the beginning of 1896 the Little Englanders found something to criticise in the attitude of Lord Rosebery to the Jameson Raid. He denounced it, of course ; he even took a pleasure in making Mr. Chamberlain uncomfortable ; but he was obviously as willing as anybody in the Government to pass as lightly over the incident as due regard for "unctuous rectitude" allowed. His real feelings were shown during the Boer War, when he declared : "You may be quite sure that no English gentleman would have engaged in what may be called a filibustering raid, had it not been for the cry of distress which proceeded from the Transvaal."

As nothing could persuade the average Briton of the day that Dr. Jameson was guilty of anything but a small technical offence, public opinion could not be mobilised on this question in the interests of the anti-Imperialists. But a better opportunity was afforded by the Armenian massacres which were the worst disgrace of the blood-stained reign of the Sultan Abdul Hamid. Lord Rosebery from the first spoke not only like a man of sense, but also like a man of deep feeling, concerning these horrors. In his speech at the opening of Parliament in 1886, he expressed "the humiliation of seeing these Christians whom we were pledged to protect, massacred and plundered under the sublime gaze of the European concert, complete in itself and directed by one of the authors of the Treaty of Berlin." But though he might, as a private individual, feel keenly "the position of apathy, and, I would add, of degradation, in which we now find ourselves in reference to the Christian population of the Sultan," he could not as a statesman adopt or encourage the views of his extreme followers in favour of independent British action.

Probably the agitation that ensued was in the main spontaneous. The Armenian transactions were very horrible ; and that part of the population naturally most inclined to be shocked by them was also most unwarlike, and therefore, most prone to underrate the

seriousness of war even "in a good cause." But, however sincere the movement in its lower depths, there can be no doubt that excitement was fomented by calculating politicians, with the object of making Lord Rosebery's position impossible. At last things came to a head. Bloodshed on a frightful scale in Constantinople itself stirred Mr. Gladstone to the last great public effort of his life, a fierce denunciation of Turkey.

> The distinction of the massacres of Constantinople, as compared with those that have taken place before (said Mr. Gladstone), is not in their moral infamy; it is in this, that to all the other dreadful manifestations which have been displayed in the face of the world there is added consummate insolence. Translate the acts of the Sultan into words, and they become these: "I have tried your patience in distant places: I will now try it under your own eyes. I have desolated my provinces; I will now desolate my capital. I have found that your sensitiveness has not been effectually provoked by all that I have done hitherto; I will now come nearer to you, and see whether by vicinity I shall or shall not awake the wrath which has slept so long." Some of it has been awakened; and the weakness of diplomacy, I trust, is now about to be strengthened by the echoes of a nation's voice.

Mr. Gladstone was anxious for a crusade on the part of Europe against the "Great Assassin." But if Europe shirked a crusade, then he was for single-handed action by England. He had persuaded himself that there was no danger in this duty, but even had he thought otherwise, he would still, doubtless, have insisted on the duty.

Such intervention by his old chief could not be ignored, and Lord Rosebery lost no time in re-stating his own view, which was that, while feeling "all possible indignation," he could not favour an "impulse" by the Liberal Party. The responsibility of action rested with the Government, and the Government had to consider the other Powers, with none of which, unfortunately, it seemed to be on good terms. It would be fatal to make the Armenian question a Party one; and if there were to be meetings they should be "national, spontaneous, unsectional."

There were murmurs at this discouragement of an agitation to which most of the Party newspapers were

fully committed, and after Lord Rosebery had declared that he was "not prepared, in ignorance of much that only the Government could know, to assume the position of the executive and to attempt to direct the government of the country," an indignation meeting was held at Liverpool, at which Mr. Gladstone delivered a vehement speech. He disclaimed any intention of driving the country into war against Turkey or the Powers. It was not a question of war, but of coercion. This was an effort of the same mind that distinguished between being "surrounded" and being "hemmed in." As a lifelong talker, Mr. Gladstone had, perhaps, an excessive faith in the value of mere declarations. His idea was that first of all the British Ambassador should be withdrawn from Constantinople as a protest against the massacres. Then Turkey should be reminded that under the Anglo-Turkish Convention of 1878, Great Britain was entitled to insist on reform. But if Turkey remained obdurate, and the Powers showed themselves hostile to independent British action, Great Britain need not "proceed to extremities." Meanwhile, it was her duty to intervene alone if the Powers refused to intervene conjointly. "The word honour," wrote Mr. Gladstone in one of the reviews for October 1896, "had better be erased from our dictionaries if we refuse to acknowledge our obligations."

Lord Rosebery, with a juster appreciation of European conditions, recognised that such a policy must at best be ineffective, and at worst might lead to a great European conflagration—"a scene of universal carnage and ruin, preceded and accompanied by the extermination of the Armenians." But it was clear that Mr. Gladstone had on his side the enthusiasm of the English Radicals, who even talked of recalling him to the leadership. Sir William Harcourt, bitter as was his animosity, was too sensible to be deceived by, and too honest to simulate acquiescence in, the Gladstonian policy ; but this candour of an old enemy could not compensate for the failure of other support and, in view of the past, Lord Rosebery felt it intolerable to place himself in a

position of acute difference with Mr. Gladstone. He decided, therefore, to resign the leadership of the Liberal Party. In a letter dated October 8, 1896, directed to the Chief Liberal Whip, he indicated with frank brevity the reasons for his retirement. He found himself, he said, in apparent difference with a considerable body of the Liberal Party and in some conflict with Mr. Gladstone—who "must necessarily always exercise a matchless authority in the Party"—while from no quarter did he receive explicit support. The situation, except as regarded Mr. Gladstone, was not altogether new. He made no complaints, but was unwilling any longer to appear to "divide the energy and try the faith of Liberals."

This dry statement was interestingly amplified in a speech at Edinburgh the next day. "In foreign politics," Lord Rosebery declared, "he had never known Party." But even had it been otherwise he should have deemed it his duty in this crisis to give all his support to the Government. He proceeded with much force to express his own horror at the massacres, incidentally expressing the prayer that Constantinople, the scene of some of the worst excesses, might yet again be the capital of Eastern Christianity. Such were his feelings. But what could be done? The Sultan could not be deposed by the isolated action of Great Britain. The Cyprus tribute could not be withdrawn, for the good reason that it had never been paid, since it went automatically to the service of the Ottoman debt. With regard to another suggested course, the handing over of Turkey to Russia, it had not always been the fashion of Englishmen to approve of Russian administrative methods. Then it had been proposed by Mr. Gladstone that Great Britain should withdraw her Ambassador. That, he submitted, would be to deprive ourselves of what influence we possessed in Turkey, and in the Concert of Europe, and it was one of the ways in which, without meaning it, Great Britain might drift into war. Finally, to threaten Turkey, without the intention to make the threats good, in the event of disapproval by the Powers, was to add

"a public and humiliating confession of impotence" to all the other disadvantages of the situation. "If there is one rule of diplomacy which I regard as sacred," said Lord Rosebery, "it is this—you should never put your foot farther than you can keep it down." A lady had written to him: "Why, if Europe fails us, do we not go in alone? We might be shattered, but in what nobler cause could Great Britain be shattered?" "I wrote back," said Lord Rosebery dryly, "to say that I did not wish Great Britain to be shattered; and she replied: 'My Lord, your answer saddened me.'"

Mr. Gladstone had spoken of "the phantom of a European war." To this Lord Rosebery retorted effectively:

> I believe it is no phantom at all. I do believe that there was a fixed and resolute agreement on the part of the Great Powers, all of them, or nearly all of them, to resist by force any single-handed intervention by England in the affairs of the East. . . . You know what a European war means. It means the massacre, the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of people; it means the ruin and devastation of the regions it invests; it means danger to many countries, and perhaps worse to this country—almost our national existence. It means that, on the hypothesis that our fleet would be engaged largely in the extreme east of Europe, our coasts, our liberties, our properties would be largely exposed to attack at home; and in all probability the war would be preceded by the extermination of those very Armenian populations on whose behalf you proposed to engage in it. I can conceive nothing more futile, more disastrous, more dangerous than such a policy as this.

Lord Rosebery further pointed out that the addition in the course of twelve years of two million six hundred thousand square miles to the British Empire had "excited to an almost intolerable degree the envy of other colonising countries." He was supposed to be "rather a sinner" in respect to Colonial policy, but with this mass of "undigested Empire" the policy of peace was simply forced on Great Britain:

> It is, then, against a solitary and feverish intervention in the East that I enter my protest. Some persons, some guides of public opinion, are trying to work up in this country the sort of ecstasy which precedes war, even if it does not intend war. Against that I protest, and against that I will fight.

At this distance it is seen plainly enough that on every issue Lord Rosebery was right and Mr. Gladstone wrong. But to the Radicals of the middle 'nineties there was something blasphemous in opposition to the retired leader, qualified though it was with words conveying the warmest personal respect, while the disinclination to risk war on behalf of the Armenians seemed equally inhuman and pusillanimous.

This temper deprived Lord Rosebery of the sympathy which his subsequent explanations might well have won him. The differences over Armenia were, he said, only the last of a series of incidents :

> I do not think, gentlemen, that you have ever quite sufficiently realised what is the position of a Liberal leader who is also a Peer. He is, parliamentarily speaking, almost impotent and helpless. He is shut up in a permanently hostile assembly with a handful of followers. His voice, under the most favourable circumstances, can only be heard in the House of Commons, the seat of power, through the mouth of another. At a General Election, when the fortunes and future of himself and his Party are in the balance, he is restricted to absolute silence. He is, in effect, in the position of riding a horse without reins. A man in that position has no chance of succeeding in the lead of the Liberal Party unless he receives very exceptional support, very exceptional loyalty, and very exceptional co-operation from the Party inside and outside Parliament to make up for his own deficiencies. Perhaps I had no right to expect any such exceptional measure, but at any rate I cannot say that I received it. Rather was my being a Peer, which was to some extent the reason of my impotence, urged as a reason for further hampering my efforts. Before we had been in office for more than two days we were defeated by our own followers by a majority of two. That was not a God-speed for the Government, or any sign of the special and exceptional cordiality and support which was required by a Liberal Government headed by a Peer. Further, I ventured, as it was my duty to do, to urge a definite and concentrated policy on the Party. That definite and concentrated policy was not adopted. The last event has been the last straw which decided my position. Our leader—for Mr. Gladstone must always lead the Liberal Party when he wishes to—has come forward in a noble and sublime spirit ; but he has innocently and unconsciously administered the final *coup de grâce* to his successor, because, however much I may differ from Mr. Gladstone in opinion on this question or any other, I never will appear in sharp conflict with him when I am holding the position, titular or otherwise, of leader of the Liberal Party.

With regard to the future, Lord Rosebery offered a

solemn word of advice. "Choose your leader," he said, "with what caution, care, and deliberation you may. When you have chosen him, close up your ranks and follow him; for this I can tell you, as an absolute maxim, that a united Party behind an inferior leader is more efficacious than a disunited Party with the best leader that ever lived." Finally, he thanked, for their "devoted co-operation," Mr. Asquith, Sir Henry Fowler, Mr. Bryce, and Mr. Arnold Morley. Mr. Asquith he singled out "even from these four, because, consummate and considerable as are his powers of brain, in my opinion his head is not equal to his heart, and it is that rare combination of head and heart which, if my prophecy is worth anything, will conduct him to the highest office of the State."

Without hypocrisy the name of Sir William Harcourt could not have been added to those of the faithful few, but it is significant that no place was found in the list for Mr. John Morley. He had been prominent in the exclusion of Sir William Harcourt—indeed, it may be said that his influence turned the scale—and afterwards gave cogent reasons for his preference. But he was a Manchester School man of "conviction strong," unalterably opposed to the whole Imperialist philosophy, and on the personal side, if he had found Harcourt a difficult man, he had not found Lord Rosebery precisely an easy one. Few people did.

One thing highly became Lord Rosebery in his resignation. He had suffered from Mr. Gladstone a cruel wrong, which nothing but the intense sincerity of the retired leader could excuse. He had been flouted to the applause of his nominal followers, his authority had been defied, he had virtually been swept from his post by this tempestuous intervention. Yet the words in which he referred to his former chief were informed not only with magnanimity, but with almost filial tenderness. "Whatever our differences on public policy may be," he said, "what has passed between Mr. Gladstone and myself goes too deep, is too rooted, too entwined in all

that I value and hold holy in public and private life for me to forget, even for a moment, what I owe to him. Whatever our differences may be, they never could alter the veneration, the unbounded respect, the deep affection with which I regard him."

Not many months later came an occasion when it must have been a melancholy satisfaction that he had so successfully tempered criticism on public grounds with such happily expressed private regard. In the summer of 1898 Lord Rosebery acted as a pall-bearer at Mr. Gladstone's funeral in Westminster Abbey, and it fell to him to pronounce in the House of Lords a stately panegyric on his dead chief, that "pure, splendid, dauntless figure," to which generations still to come, through many long years, would "look for encouragement in labour, for fortitude in adversity, for the example of a sublime Christianity, with constant hope and constant encouragement." In the autumn of the same year, Lord Rosebery, speaking at a meeting at Edinburgh to consider proposals for a national memorial, dilated on Mr. Gladstone's connection with the Scottish capital. He recalled how Mr. Gladstone had often spoken to him of his life there as a young man—of the long walks he used to take with Dr. Chalmers, and of how on one occasion he had retrieved from a ploughed field the blown-off hat of that distinguished divine. The great transport of enthusiasm during the Midlothian campaign Lord Rosebery attributed less to the political character of Mr. Gladstone's visit than to its personal aspect. "It was rather a tribute given by Scotsmen to one who had constantly boasted of his pure Scottish origin." "We in Scotland," Lord Rosebery continued, "are reproached with our clannishness. We are proud of our men. Our geese are apt to be swans ; but when we have seen a swan let us show that we understand it."

On the subject of Mr. Gladstone he was indeed inexhaustible. At the unveiling of the statue at Glasgow in 1902, he spoke of the infinite variousness of Mr. Gladstone's genius. He could have been, had politics not claimed him, "a great Churchman, a great

professor, a great historian, a great bookman, grappling with whole libraries and wrestling with academies ; indeed, it was hard to conceive a career, except perhaps the military, in which his energy and intellect would not have placed him on a summit." One anecdote Lord Rosebery told of Mr. Gladstone's powers of concentration—how he gave sittings for days to a sculptor as he sat writing imperturbably. Another had reference to his amazing vitality ; when well on in his ninth decade he was knocked down by a cab, but before the bystanders could give help he was up and in pursuit, with a view to taking the number. Another story had reference to his lifelong piety ; at Eton, when an indelicate toast was proposed at some merry-making, young Gladstone, alone among the boys, refused to drink it ; " in spite of the storm of objurgation and ridicule, he jammed his face down in his hands on the table and would not budge."

In the course of his Presidential address to the Edinburgh Philosophical Society in the autumn of 1898, Lord Rosebery, in the course of a very interesting disquisition, on " bookish statesmen," declared that Mr. Gladstone " loved books as much as a man may do without suspicion of bibliomania." It was his principle to make his imports balance his exports—he took in a great deal, but he put forth a great deal, and his close study of a book was pretty sure to precede an article on that book. To first editions or broad margins or vellum copies Mr. Gladstone was indifferent :

> But had he been a very wealthy man even this form of the noble disease might have taken him. As it was he loved collecting, buying, handling books. It was a joy to him to arrange with his own hands the books in the library he had founded in honour of St. Deiniol. It was a sport to him to hunt down books in sale catalogues. It was a sacred trust to him to preserve the little treasures of his youth, a classic or two that he had at Eton, the book given to him by Hannah Moore.

This worship of Mr. Gladstone sat gracefully on Lord Rosebery, both in his glowing youth and in his marred prime. But it may be questioned whether the

prostrate attitude was altogether good for him. Lord Rosebery's mind was naturally a kingdom sufficiently divided against itself. With an eighteenth-century taste and a very modern outlook ; with the temper of an autocrat and the sensitiveness of a woman ; ambitious and luxurious, fond equally of power and ease, of the pleasures of social triumph, and those of solitude ; relishing applause as much as Cæsar, but scorning it with much of Casca's fastidious contempt for the "stinking breath" of the multitude ; respectful of democracy in the abstract, but intolerant of it in the concrete ; *laissez-faire* in philosophy but not in instinct ; a Liberal with a tenderness for all great despots ; a man whose developed social conscience was never quite at peace with his great superfluity of possession ; an idealist with numerous points of contact with the most materialistic people of his class and time—there was already a big enough battle for him to fight before he could arrive at a comfortable poise. Without Mr. Gladstone he might have subdued these incoherencies ; every man has the same sort of task, more or less, and most men make some sort of success of it. But the deep reverence for Mr. Gladstone, long surviving intellectual assent to Mr. Gladstone's opinions, added a fresh twist to an already tangled skein. Lord Rosebery could not resist Mr. Gladstone, and he could not agree with him ; he honoured everything in the prophet but the prophet's faith. The strain of an allegiance at once ungrudging and unconvinced could only be disastrous. A few undisturbed years might perhaps have availed to bring the younger man, released from the attraction of this portentous influence, into a settled orbit of his own. Unhappily there was no such interval. Before Mr. Gladstone's death Lord Rosebery had passed the decisive stage in his public life, and—though the fact was still not apparent—he was already committed to the barrenness of the "lonely furrow."

CHAPTER XIV

THE LONELY FURROW

Lord Rosebery in Retirement—Constant Expectation of a Restoration—Strongly Supported—His Views on Fashoda—Their Expression Precipitates Harcourt's Retirement—Attitude to Campbell-Bannerman—Advises Dropping of Home Rule and Adoption of Imperialistic Policy.

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT soon discovered that there had been an ironic quality in Lord Rosebery's hope that his resignation might hasten the day of complete Liberal unity. The retirement merely gave new momentum to the disruptive forces.

It is just possible that Lord Rosebery had no intention of returning to the Liberal leadership, though on such an assumption it would be difficult to explain many of his actions during the next few years. Quite probably he did not know his own mind. Politics both attracted and repelled him, and it may be that his apparent vacillations are to be explained by a simple deficiency of energy. Somebody once said to Lord Salisbury, in reference to a great effort of Gladstone's : "How I wish I had his mind." "You could have his mind," said Salisbury, "if I had his digestion." Lord Rosebery seems to have suffered from a mental indigestion. His appetite for many kinds of experience was too keen to be denied satisfaction, and even over-satisfaction, but he had to pay for his indulgence in fits of lethargy and nausea and black pessimism. Some hint of his trouble is given in his books. When he dwells on the amount of routine work accomplished by a statesman like Peel, or dilates on the all-devouring activities of Napoleon, we are given the impression of the clever amateur watching the expert with a puzzled admiration and envy, realising the

cleverness of it all, but not quite understanding that half of it is simply the trick of the trade. Lord Rosebery never quite acquired this technical mastery ; he remained always the brilliant amateur, with the amateur's wasteful use of energy and consequent need of frequent periods of rest.

A statesman's life is at best slavery. He has three masters—the monarch, Parliament, and the public. Parliament is, on the whole, less troublesome than it used to be. The degree in which the monarch interferes is a personal and, therefore, an incalculable question ; some occupants of the throne leave their Ministers very much alone ; others, as did Queen Victoria, feel it a duty to offer advice on every sort of issue. The public has been for many years an increasingly severe task-master. Since it is impossible to please all three, and frequently not possible to please one, the first necessity of the statesman is a callousness without insensibility. He cannot ignore, but he must not trouble himself over-much about feeling in this quarter or that ; and he must always be content with something less than the ideal course. The perfectly courtier-like answer cannot be given to the palace ; the perfectly straightforward course cannot be taken with Parliament ; the perfectly honest "Yes" or "No" cannot be rendered to the people. It is not a question of morals but of business. There is no time for it. Lord Rosebery, however, had the amateur's relish for over-elaboration. He so loved the courtly side of a Minister's duties that it was a pain to him to miss a detail of it. He delighted in the minutiæ of official work. He felt such satisfaction in the applause of a public audience that he polished his speeches with enormous care. His parliamentary speeches must not only be good for the immediate purpose, but good in every way. The consequent strain was over-great ; fatigue and insomnia produced a longing for release ; and the eager, pleasant candidate for office soon became the wayward, snappish, and impracticable colleague.

In retirement Lord Rosebery seems to have been

alternately swayed by his memory of the pleasure he undoubtedly took in public business, and not least in the courtly side of it, and by his recollection of the miseries of the incessant strain on a too sensitive nature and an artistic conscience inappropriate to the journeyman politician. That he wanted again to be somebody is fairly clear. But when he began to consider the price, he seems to have been always unwilling to pay it.

Whatever the exact case with himself, however, his friends did not cease for years to expect and work for a restoration. They were determined that the leadership of the Party should be at his disposal if he cared to take it, and their efforts were bent to making the position of any other leader precarious and impermanent. Sir William therefore remained, as he had been since 1894, the leader of the Party in the House of Commons ; and a formal allegiance was rendered him in that capacity, but from many platforms it was ostentatiously declared that the time was not propitious for the selection of a leader for the Party as a whole. Harcourt, indeed, was left in much the position of Lord Hartington between 1874 and 1880. Lord Rosebery was, like Gladstone, ostensibly out of politics, but it was generally understood that there would be a " return from Elba," and the usual demoralisation attendant on a disputed succession was added to the other trials of the Party. Many were secretly working for Lord Rosebery, and still more wished to be right with the illustrious exile without being too wrong with the *de facto* chief. Harcourt could depend on nobody. He might be comforted by the murmured sympathy of Mr. John Morley, who had arrived at a certain impatience with Lord Rosebery, partly because of the latter's constant movement away from the Manchester School ideals, partly on the practical ground that, as a man still under fifty, he might well have put up for a few years with Harcourt, who was nearing seventy. In this attitude Mr. Morley was no doubt sincere, for his political position was so much nearer Harcourt's than Lord Rosebery's that his declaration for Lord Rosebery in 1894 was chiefly to be explained

on grounds of personal pique. But Harcourt knew by this time that the philosophic Radical was no very present help in trouble of this particular kind. He had too many friends in both camps, and too much general-purposes kindliness to deny Lord Rosebery his share ; for the rest, seeing no necessity to stand by the Party in times " more and more demented," he had practically withdrawn from active politics.

Among the more energetic spirits the balance of sympathy was undoubtedly with Lord Rosebery. Mr. Asquith had not yet fully identified himself with the Liberal Imperialists, and contrived to remain on excellent terms with Harcourt, but his heart was at Dalmeny. Sir Edward Grey was, on personal and other grounds, a complete Rosebery man. Mr. R. B. Haldane, who, with his great abilities and passion for intrigue, had established an influence not usually belonging to a private member, was an active plotter from the first for a Rosebery restoration. Sir Henry Fowler remained true to his early preference, and carried with him the Methodist Imperialist, Sir Robert Perks. In the Press, Lord Rosebery had a formidable backing. His, body and soul, was Mr. (afterwards Sir) E. T. Cook, the editor of the *Daily News*. Cook occupied the proud position of being the only person " connected with the Press " in whom Lord Rosebery had " complete confidence." He was always welcome at Berkeley-square or the Durdans ; was valued equally as a counsellor and a companion ; and was mourned after his death as a " singularly gifted " man and a " delightful friend." This affection and condescension Cook repaid, while he was able, by the most strenuous service, and the *Daily News* was for some years the most consistent and intelligent exponent of Imperialistic policy. Mr. Massingham, who had somewhat cooled in his former passion for Lord Rosebery, was still not unfavourable ; and in London at least non-Imperialistic Liberalism was very inadequately represented.

The planets in their courses also fought against

[1] *Life of Sir Edward Cook* (Saxon Mills).

the Harcourt leadership. The Jameson Raid and its sequels had intensified Imperialistic feeling in the country generally, and thus given fresh inspiration and encouragement to that section of the Liberal Party which was anxious to be done with the old tradition. Party philosophies are apt to be the sport of Party exigency and, just as a Conservative leader found it convenient to " dish the Whigs," so influential Liberals now looked forward to beating the Conservative Imperialists with their own weapons. They were not without a shrewd sense of certain realities.

The eleven years which had elapsed since the Home Rule split had brought a great revulsion from the ideals of Bright and Gladstone. Belief in political reform had weakened ; the " progressive-minded " man was much less interested in questions of voting, and constitutional refinements appeared to him of comparatively minor amount. It had come to be realised that the more the franchise was enlarged the less the electorate had any real power to influence policy, the less Parliament represented the nation, and the less Government respected Parliament. The Government of the day was clearly seen to exercise more and more power over the time and procedure of the House of Commons ; Party discipline, enforced by the threat of dissolution in times when elections were constantly growing more troublesome and expensive, had increased in severity ; and Ministers, deferent to the wishes of rich subscribers who desired above all to preserve the basis of society which made easy the accumulation and preservation of riches, tended more and more to invent artificial contentions in order to divert attention from real issues.

With the growing unrealities of politics, the more vital elements in the population began, during the long Home Rule fight, to turn their thoughts elsewhere. One section, despairing of the vision of a new England, turned to the reality of a new Empire, and found in Mr. Rudyard Kipling the eloquent Aaron, in Mr. Cecil Rhodes the somewhat cynical Moses, of the overseas land of promise. It became the fashion with such

people to think of Great Britain as a worn-out land, destined in the fullness of time to be little but the pleasure-garden of the creators of wealth made abroad—a land which, therefore, might well preserve, as adding to the amenities of a new aristocracy, all the picturesque anomalies and small privileges of which Liberalism was the sworn foe. Another section, convinced of the incurable impotence and insincerity of central government while the ghosts of Tory and Whig still walked, was in favour of concentrating on reform through the agency of the local authorities and the trade unions. Both sections were the natural enemies of the old-fashioned Liberalism. The Imperialists saw the chance of the new Conservatism which Mr. Chamberlain actually succeeded in fashioning—a Conservatism in which the new wealth should be the political heir of the old. The Socialists had already conceived the possibility of a Labour Party inspired by a Collectivist policy.

Lord Rosebery and his friends were well aware of one of the dangers threatening Liberalism—the danger of being out of touch with the Imperialistic spirit which, under the influence of Kaffir balance-sheets and Kipling verses, was captivating both the romantics of business and the romantics of adventure. They were at the same time rather inclined to over-estimate the chances of a renovated Liberalism attracting the working-classes. By a judicious mixture of the essences of Cecil Rhodes and Sydney Webb, of Kipling and Bernard Shaw, they proposed to divert a good deal of the support given to Conservatism, while retaining the allegiance of everything that called itself progressive. To attain this aim, the first essential was to reduce the Little Englander to impotence, and for this purpose the glamour of Lord Rosebery was deemed indispensable. It is, of course, unnecessary to think of Lord Rosebery himself as thus cynically calculating the electoral advantages of adapting Liberalism to the temper of the day, or rather of wholly transforming it. His passion for the Empire dates from a time long before any considerable body of British

citizens had learned to "think Imperially" in his sense, for Disraelian Imperialism, mainly concerned with the balance of power in Europe and the Near East, was rather a reversion to the policy of Wolsey than an anticipation of that of Chamberlain. Lord Rosebery himself, in pursuing the Imperialist line, was mainly indulging an enthusiasm and following an instinct. But some of his followers were probably influenced by the belief that in supporting him they were associating themselves not only with the coming man but with the winning cause. Dalmeny became a St. Germains, and it was long before the dream of a Rosebery restoration was quite banished. In the meanwhile the plotters behaved much like the Jacobites. They affected loyalty to the *de facto* king, while betraying all his secrets to the exile. Every political Party is subject to the diseases which affected Liberalism between 1896 and 1905, but there was a contrast between the squalor of the realities and the nobility of the professions that makes the epoch stand out with a sinister salience.

Lord Rosebery had found the excuse for retirement in a question of foreign policy, in which his former chief had intervened to the detriment of his authority. Harcourt resigned the House of Commons leadership in almost parallel circumstances. When the Fashoda incident produced extreme tension between Great Britain and France, Sir William assumed an attitude which, while not hostile to the Government, was sharply critical of the language used by certain Ministers. The British Government, contesting the French argument that any Egyptian claim on Fashoda had lapsed, had quoted a statement by Sir Edward Grey in 1895 that any French advance into the Nile Valley would be regarded as an unfriendly act. This declaration had been at the time a subject of acute difference between Lord Rosebery and Sir William Harcourt, who had complained that he was not consulted before it was made. Two circumstances now (September 1898) conspired to convince him that he could not carry on. The first was a speech by Sir Edward Grey, who, though still nominally Sir

William's follower, made an important deliverance on the Fashoda Question without previous consultation. The second was a speech by Lord Rosebery himself at an agricultural meeting in Surrey. In it he stated that he had been "both Ministerially and personally responsible" for the declaration of Sir Edward Grey and, while chiding Mr. Chamberlain, who had told the French to "mend their manners," declared that, though he hoped for a friendly settlement, there could be no compromise as to the rights of Egypt. In various parts of the world there had recently been a tendency to treat England as a negligible quantity. But "if the nations of the world are under the impression that the ancient spirit of Great Britain is dead, or that her resources are weakened or her population less determined to maintain the rights and honour of its flag, they make a mistake which can only end in a disastrous conflagration."

Sir William Harcourt strongly resented these utterances, not so much because they were to some extent out of harmony with the tone of his own criticisms, but because they somewhat ostentatiously advertised the manner in which he had been ignored by Lord Rosebery in 1895. He therefore determined to resign, and bring to an end the pretence of a united Party. His intention was conveyed in a letter to Mr. John Morley (December 1898). He disclaimed all responsibility for the disunion, and his declaration that he had put no obstacle in the way of a healing of the schism was supported by Mr. Morley, who acquitted him of "singling out this personage or that" as men with whom he would not co-operate, and stated "it is not from you, at any rate, that attempts at proscription have proceeded." Mr. Morley himself shortly followed, and the leaden care of the Liberal leadership devolved on Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. No other selection, says an eminent expert, was possible. In other words, Sir Henry was the only statesman thought at once sufficiently eminent and sufficiently colourless to serve as the figure-head of a Party so divided. The Liberal Imperialists

considered him a convenient warming-pan for Lord Rosebery. The non-Imperialists accepted him without enthusiasm as a useful stop-gap till such time as the Party could settle down to an agreed policy. Neither had any notion that this man of plain sense, with his mixture of Scottish caution and English honesty, would end as the unchallenged head of a re-united Party.

One expectation was immediately disappointed. So far from colourless was Campbell-Bannerman that all the antagonism the Rosebery camp had shown to Harcourt, and more also, was soon directed against his stolid figure. Lord Rosebery did not long refrain from giving the new leader the benefit of his thoughts on things in general and the state of the Liberal Party in particular. Speaking at the City Liberal Club in May 1899, in a "disembodied way," he congratulated Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman on the way he had rallied the Opposition, but went on to talk of the decay of parliamentary Liberalism as a very great disaster to the country itself. Despite this decay of parliamentary Liberalism the Liberal spirit in the country was never more vigorous. Whence this anomalous position? Lord Rosebery's answer was decisive :

> Until you have the Liberal Party as it was before 1886, reconstituted in some form or another, or until you have a new Party constituted which will embody all the elements which existed in the Liberal Party before 1886, you will never have that predominance in the country which seemed the heritage and almost the birthright of the Liberal Party.

This was, of course, a counsel to drop Home Rule formally and definitely. To this negative advice was added a positive counsel :

> There is one important change which has materially modified the whole aspect of British politics. I mean the greater pride in Empire which is called Imperialism. Many people denounce Imperialism with great heartiness. It is, they say, the cause of all our evils; it is the cause of swollen Budgets; in fact it lurks in every conceivable evil that affects the British Commonwealth. But Imperialism, sane Imperial-

ism, as distinguished from what I would call wild-cat Imperialism, is nothing but this—a larger patriotism. When I first entered public life patriotism seemed to be confined to these islands. The politicians of those days seemed to consider that the Colonies were like the tails of some creeping things—liable to be snapped off at a moment's notice, and therefore immaterial to the creature itself. The Colonies were considered as outside provinces, with which we had only a temporary connection, and in which therefore we never had any definite interest. But in the last thirty-five years a change has come over the spirit of the people. . . . We must take that in counting up the record of the old Liberal Party. If the old Liberal Party, as it was before 1886, is to be revived, or any new Party is to be founded on its severance, this factor at any rate must be prominent to the minds of those who construct or revive. I believe that if the old Liberal spirit were combined with the new Imperial spirit, definitely and nominally, the Liberal Party would once more regain its lost predominance and would have a future which would vie with the richest traditions of the past.

Sir William Harcourt retorted fiercely the next day. He had once described Cecil Rhodes as the most moderate man he ever met—" he only wants slavery and Protection." In somewhat the same spirit he satirised Lord Rosebery's demand ; all he wanted was the sacrifice of the entire Liberal programme ; and " all this comes from one who was one of the principal colleagues of Mr. Gladstone, and a party to all which it is now sought to obliterate." [1]

War was now open. Lord Rosebery commiserated Liberalism on its embarrassment by " a superfluity of retired leaders," while Mr. Morley, who was not unaffected by the Roseberian denunciation, was urged to, perhaps, his most famous figure—his description of the Lord of Dalmeny and Mentmore as " a dark horse in a loose box." Campbell-Bannerman, meanwhile, calmly let the " disembodied spirits " exchange epigrams. He had delivered himself of his non-Imperialist faith, had accepted any odd support that the wraiths of that persuasion could spare him in the intervals of warfare with ghosts of the opposite complexion, and had set about sturdily to bring about some semblance of Liberal unity in the House of Commons itself. Whatever else may have been in Lord Rosebery's mind it is fairly

[1] *Life of Sir William Harcourt* (A. G. Gardiner).

safe to conjecture that it never occurred to him that "C.-B.," whom he had carelessly congratulated and patronisingly corrected, was to be the one insurmountable obstacle to the victorious return which, there is reason to believe, he still contemplated as a possibility of the near future.

CHAPTER XV

WAR AND THE LIBERAL SCHISM

The Boer War—Lord Rosebery's Challenge on "Majuba Magnanimity"—Puts aside Efforts towards Liberal Re-union—The Chesterfield Speech—"Fly-blown Phylacteries" and the "Clean Slate"—Policy of "Efficiency"—"Outside the Tabernacle"—Failure to Improve Advantages over "Little Englanders."

THE COMING of the Boer War confirmed the rupture between the two Liberal factions. While there remained any hope of a peaceful issue to the negotiations with President Kruger, Lord Rosebery preserved complete silence, and it was not until the ultimatum of President Kruger had made war inevitable that he gave a cue to his followers. Then, writing on October 11, 1899 to one of those convenient "correspondents" used by statesmen for the purposes of manifesto, he declared that, while he saw much to criticise if not to condemn in the Government's dealings with the Transvaal, the action of the Boer President had made all such discussion futile.

"In the face of this attack," he added, "the nation will, I doubt not, close its ranks and relegate Party controversy to a more convenient season. There is one more word to be said. Without attempting to judge the policy which concluded peace after the reverse of Majuba Hill, I am bound to state my profound conviction that there is no conceivable Government in this country which could repeat it."

The sting of this pronouncement was in its tail. It was Lord Rosebery's right, and even his duty, as an eminent public man, to call on the nation to face unitedly a national danger. It was his part as a man of common

sense, to whom the public looked for guidance, to advise the postponement of controversy while the guns spoke. But the reference to Majuba Hill could be interpreted in only one way. It was an invitation to the Liberal Imperialists, a challenge to the Little Englanders; and neither invitation nor challenge could be ignored. For the magnanimity of Mr. Gladstone after Majuba was one of those things which permit of no middle opinion. It was either magnificent or it was pusillanimous; it was either the highest wisdom or the poorest sort of folly. No Liberal policy had been more scornfully condemned; none had been more freely advertised as possessing the mark of true genius and enlightenment. In short, in the whole career of Gladstone there had been nothing more Gladstonian than Majuba. Lord Rosebery, whose name was so intimately associated with Midlothian and Gladstone, now asked Liberals to concur, not only in waging the war, but in anticipating the peace, with those who had always spoken in "cheap irony" (to borrow Lord Morley's phrase) of the "magnanimity of Majuba."

The answer was decisive. No serious Liberal politician was found ready to obstruct the Government in its task of bringing the war to a successful conclusion, for Mr. Lloyd George, who did take the course of voting against supplies, was not then regarded as a serious politician. On the larger issue, however, the rupture was immediate and complete. Lord Rosebery attracted a group of Liberals small in number, but strong in personality, including Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Asquith, Mr. R. B. Haldane, and Sir Henry Fowler. Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley, the former with characteristic vigour, the latter with conviction indeed, but no desire to imitate the "ultra-elect" who "only ran their heads against stone walls,"[1] maintained the anti-Imperialist position. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, with his slow caution, attempted for a time the difficult task of being both honest and non-committal; and for the moment the main con-

[1] *Recollections* (Lord Morley).

troversy was between leaders who professed no longer to lead.

Speaking at Bath at the end of October, Lord Rosebery more fully expounded his views. The question, he said, was not a very complicated one. The Boer resistance was the effort of a community to put back the hands of the clock, and might be compared with the similar effort of the Mormons. It was wholly impossible, in this condition of the world's affairs, that the Boers should seclude themselves, any more than the Mormons. The Boer attitude, he repeated, had proved that it was out of the question to make another such peace as that which followed Majuba :

> There has been a great misunderstanding of that transaction. The battle of Majuba Hill was not a very considerable battle at all—it was a mere skirmish—and concurrently with that there was an attempt on the part of the then Government to settle peacefully the issue of the Transvaal. Now, whatever you may think of the result of that attempt the thing itself was a sublime experiment. It was an attempt to carry into international policy the spirit of the Gospel itself, and had it been successful we should have been entitled to believe that mankind had taken a great stride forward. It was not merely that Mr. Gladstone wished to apply the principle of the religion which was so dear to him to international policy that made him make that attempt. Mr. Gladstone, it is very little known except to those who were most intimate with him, had an overpowering conviction of the great might of England. He thought that Great Britain could afford to do things, owing to that overpowering might and dominion, which other nations could not afford to do without a risk of misunderstanding, and for that reason, which has never been clearly enough set before the public, he endeavoured, after what was undoubtedly a reverse, to treat with the Boers as if no reverse had taken place. Now we know how that magnanimity was rewarded. We may feel perfectly confident, we who followed Mr. Gladstone, that were he now alive, and had the control of the destinies of this country, it would not be possible for him, nor would it enter his contemplation, to make terms after this war such as were made after the skirmish of Majuba Hill. I remember well that time. I had a great personal affection for Mr. Gladstone. That personal devotion made me regard with hope any course of policy that he thought fit to adopt, but on this occasion I confess I felt deep misgiving. I did not believe that the world was ripe for such an experiment. My misgiving mattered very little indeed, because I was then only a private member of Parliament, unconnected with the Government, except as a faithful supporter; but I cannot help looking back on it now, and remembering how completely the fears I felt at the time have been realised. So far from the Boers

taking the magnanimity as it was intended, they regarded it as a proof of weakness, and it was with a deliberate and constant encroachment on the terms of settlement that the Boers rewarded the sublime magnanimity of Mr. Gladstone.

Lord Rosebery dwelt on the corruption of the Transvaal Government, pointing out that official salaries amounted to £40 for every head of the population, and, while not defending the Jameson Raid, suggested that it was the outcome and symptom of a deplorable state of affairs. He added a justified word of warning as to the seriousness of the struggle:

> This, make no mistake, is no little war; and we cannot, at this critical juncture, afford to waste time in polemical discussions. When I think of this little island of ours, so lonely in these northern seas, viewed with such jealousy, with such hostility, with such jarred ambition by the great empires of the world, so friendless among nations which count their armies by embattled millions; when I think of this little island, of the work which it has undertaken, of the Empire which it has founded and which it is determined to maintain; when I think of the high pressure under which we live, of the responsibilities which we have undertaken, I say with Chatham: "Be one people, forget everything for the public."

The non-Imperialist critic had no difficulty in exposing some inconsistency in the orator. On one point he was undoubtedly right—the dangerous jealousy of foreign Powers. But had he not himself done much to increase their envy and little to diminish their ill-feeling? If England were really so lonely, so friendless, so ill-prepared to cope with "embattled millions," so unready even to meet a nation of farmer sharpshooters, was it precisely prudent to add to her commitments as Lord Rosebery had done, and had boasted of doing?

But such arguments carried little weight at such a time. At its opening the war was popular, as most wars are; and when the first wild hopes of swift and cheap victory were dissipated serious citizens were naturally much more concerned with the failures of statesmen and generals than with disputation on the rights and wrongs of the original quarrel, or the merits of the ultimate settlement. The popular politician was he who said, with due eloquence, "Get on with it," and that was a

part which Lord Rosebery could play to admiration. For a time he appeared to have the ball at his feet. A great part of the young ability of the Liberal Party was with him. There was practically no hostile Press in London ; Scotland was still clannishly behind him ; and the rapidly expanding journalistic power of Alfred Harmsworth, afterwards Viscount Northcliffe, was at his service. Harcourt had never cultivated the newspapers, and had formed no literary alliances. Lord Rosebery, while preserving a fine discretion, and securing to himself the applause of appearing to disdain all such aids, had managed to enlist a considerable detachment of devoted scribes, who puffed him in every variety of print, from the solemn quarterly to the halfpenny evening paper.

With such assets it should not have been hard at this moment to carry out the long-nourished design of re-establishing the Liberal Party on an Imperialistic basis. " C.-B.'s " authority still sat very loosely on his followers ; he could trust few of them, and few of them, in turn, trusted him ; and he was made ridiculous in the eyes of the public by an almost uniformly unfriendly Press. Skilful manœuvre might easily have given the temporary leadership to one of Lord Rosebery's lieutenants, leaving his way open to supreme authority when the tide should ultimately turn against the Conservatives. Lord Rosebery, however, allowed the opportunity to pass. Campbell-Bannerman, once he had made up his own mind, found much rank-and-file support, and there was soon no question of his forced abdication. The Liberal Imperialist attacks on him were mortifying rather than dangerous, and at last a point arrived when they were scarcely more than comic. That Sir Henry suffered keenly, that he was comforted by no very hearty loyalty even among his nominal supporters, that he knew that many who said " Lord, Lord " were perfectly ready to betray him, is certain Political integrity does not flourish in adversity such as that which beset the Liberal Party in the late 'nineties, and Campbell-Bannerman cannot be blamed if, as Lord

Morley has revealed, he "did not think too well of human nature."[1] During those troublous years he saw too much of it. Fortunately for himself, however, he was blessed with a protective temperament, and though the sting of the gad-fly made him wince it did not set up any lasting inflammation.

Campbell-Bannerman's position was somewhat improved by the Election of 1900. For while Liberalism in general did badly, as was inevitable, the Liberal Imperialists did very badly indeed. The anti-Liberal elector was in no mood to make nice distinctions; Mr. Chamberlain made none; and to a Party of a negative and middle courses, positive enthusiasm was necessarily lacking. It was made clear that, such as it was, the main strength of the Party, in the absence of anything more inviting than Lord Rosebery had so far offered, was not with the Imperial League.

Far from accepting the fact, however, the Imperialists met and passed a resolution declaring a clear and permanent distinction between themselves and those other Liberals whose opinions—such was the rather arrogant tone of the manifesto—disqualified them from controlling the action of Parliament in a world-wide community of nations. Campbell-Bannerman was roused to ire. Hitherto he had put himself under much restraint. But the attempt at an excommunicating definition which would certainly not have left himself unaffected, determined him, not only at once to declare that four-fifths of the Party remained non-Imperialist, but also to decide that in future he would be less respectful of Roseberian susceptibilities. A journalistic revolution may have contributed in some degree to this resolution. Mr. E. T. Cook was no longer in charge of the *Daily News*. That paper had been acquired by Quaker capitalists, and what had so far been a very powerful weapon for Lord Rosebery was now turned against him.

Lord Rosebery himself had taken little public part in this controversy. On the eve of the election he had taken occasion to inform the public that, while he had

[1] *Recollections* (Lord Morley).

counselled undivided support of the Government for the purposes of the war, he did not love it. Writing to Sir Hedworth Lambton, who was a candidate for Durham, he had declared that the Ministry was "only strong in votes"; in other respects it was the weakest he could recollect. It had neglected social legislation to which it was pledged, had "so managed foreign affairs as to alienate all foreign nations, while keeping our own in a hurricane of disquietude and distrust," and by its lack of military foresight and preparation had exposed the country to "humiliations unparalleled in our history since the American War." He considered there were three great national reforms which could not wait—legislation in regard to temperance, legislation for the housing of the working classes, and fearless administrative reform, especially at the War Office. In regard to South Africa he could only support "a settlement which guaranteed that the results of our sacrifices should in no jot or tittle be sacrificed, but should have as its ultimate aim that the Queen's South African Dominions should present as fair a picture of contentment, confidence, and loyal harmony as the other regions of her Empire."

It was, perhaps, in the belief that the king might be less royalist than his courtiers that Campbell-Bannerman made an earnest attempt, early in 1901, to arrive at some sort of understanding with Lord Rosebery. The latter, however, was "more immovable than steadfast,"[1] and the official Liberal leader was constrained to credit the warning of one of his few sincere adherents that any further move towards reconcilement was futile. The warning was emphasised by Lord Rosebery himself a few weeks later. In July, he published a letter concerning the "controversies in the various sections of the Liberal Party." This pronouncement was the more pointed because Mr. Asquith had only just declared that it "pained and surprised" him to be thought capable of lending himself to "an intrigue to oust from

[1] *Life of Lord Ripon* (Lucien Wolf).

the leadership one who had so nobly" served the Party as Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.

Lord Rosebery explained that he had resigned the leadership in the hope (rather than the expectation) that it would promote Liberal unity. The war, however, absolved him from the restraint he had put on himself not to embarrass his successor. There was a sincere and fundamental difference between two Schools of Liberal statesmanship—the one avowedly insular, the other holding as the first article in its creed the maintenance of a free and beneficent Empire. The two sections might call themselves by the same name, and row in the same boat; but if so the boat could not advance, for they were rowing in opposite directions. Lord Rosebery ended by disclaiming the idea of re-entering the arena of Party politics; he would, he declared, "never voluntarily return to it."

This last declaration called forth a rejoinder from Sir Edward Grey. If Lord Rosebery, he said, wished to promote the unity of the Party he must go beyond that letter. He must step in from outside. "Fitful interventions," however brilliant, would not gain the confidence of the nation, which could only be earned by his remaining in political life. Grey was evidently playing Mark Antony to his chief's Cæsar.

A few days later Lord Rosebery spoke at a dinner given to Mr. Asquith by thirty-five Liberal Imperialist M.P.'s at the City Liberal Club, and referring to the "hullabaloo" created by his letter, said it had only expressed the truth:

> The differences between the two Liberal sections are of long standing. I can point to the notorious divisions in the Cabinets of 1880–5 and of 1886—they were chiefly due to foreign and Imperial questions. The present paralysis of the Party is caused by its attitude to matters of Imperial concern. . . . For the present, at any rate, I must proceed alone. I must plough my lonely furrow, but before I get to the end of that furrow it is possible I may not find myself alone. If it be not so, I shall remain very contentedly in the society of my books. If it be otherwise I shall wait for those other circumstances to arise before I pronounce with any definiteness upon them.

This dark saying only tantalised the faithful. Their

position was indeed singular. They had formed a League round Lord Rosebery's name, but they were left in doubt whether it really encircled his spiritual presence. It was felt essential, in short, that something precise should be established as to where Lord Rosebery now stood and where he might stand in future. Hence a meeting was arranged for Chesterfield on December 15, 1901. All the resources of advertisement were exhausted on this engagement. The expectancy that reigned reminded old politicians of the Midlothian days. Quiet people in far-away corners of the earth were perplexed by Reuter telegrams giving daily bulletins of what was supposed to be in Lord Rosebery's mind. The public at home was whipped up into a frenzy of curiosity. For a moment De Wet and Delarey were forgotten. Generals disappeared momentarily from the illustrated papers, and the space was filled with photographs of Lord Rosebery in all ages and all attitudes—the long-locked, girlish-looking child ; the full-faced youth of twenty, with some slight suggestion of a prince of the House of Brunswick, and as unlike as well could be to the sulky dreamer of G. F. Watts's pictorial calumny ; the slightly overstout dandy of early middle age with the buttoned frock coat and the rounded "Rosebery collar"; finally, the "veiled prophet" of later days, with the heavy jowl and the curious eyes that seemed at once as sightless and as eager as those of the Sphinx. In short, the Chesterfield meeting was advertised with a completeness still unsurpassed. By an ironic destiny the consistent scorner of the arts of the publicity agent was himself the beneficiary of a masterpiece of political puffery.

Mr. Gladstone himself, at his best, would have found it far from easy to satisfy the expectations thus fostered. Lord Rosebery, while a graceful speaker, was no Gladstone ; and though the Chesterfield speech proved a considerable rhetorical effort, it fell quite absurdly short, in solid thought, of what might justly have been anticipated of an effort of which six full weeks' notice had been given. Indeed, to shrewd observers, it

smacked rather of the epitaph than of the manifesto and, like most epitaphs written by men for their own tombstones, it unconsciously displayed the weaknesses of the subject.

Lord Rosebery began by ostentatiously congratulating the Liberal Party on its freedom from the Irish Alliance, a freedom the more undeniable because the Nationalists themselves had repudiated, in terms almost of insult, any compact with Liberalism. But the Party, to regain power, must achieve unity, and win back the confidence of the country. That could only be done by " cleaning the slate ":

It is six years since the Liberals were in office. It is sixteen since they were in power. Meanwhile the world has not stood still; but there is Toryism as great in Liberal circles, as great and deep, though it may be less conscious, as in the Carlton Club. There are men who sit still with the fly-blown phylacteries of obsolete policies bound round their foreheads, who do not remember that while they have been mumbling their incantations to themselves, the world has been marching and revolving, and that if they have any hope of leading or guiding it they must march and move with it too. I therefore hope that when you have to write on your clean slate you will write on it a policy adapted to 1901 or 1902 and not a policy adapted to 1892 or 1885. Again I would strongly urge on you not to promise more than you can perform, to profess an honest Liberalism, to cut your coat according to your cloth, and not to hold out visions before the constituencies of the country which it is impossible for you to realise. . . . My advice is not to move much faster than the great mass of people are prepared to go. If the Liberal Party has not learned that lesson in its many years of affliction it has learned nothing. My last piece of advice to the Party is that it should not dissociate itself, even indirectly, from the new sentiment of Empire which occupies the nation.

As to a positive policy :

Well, it is a little difficult to put oneself in the place of proposing measures. One can only do that by imagining oneself the responsible Minister at this moment, and even so it requires a flight of imagination which I can hardly conceive. But my watchword, if I were in office at this moment, would be summed up in the single word Efficiency. If we have not learned from this war that we have greatly lagged behind in efficiency, we have learned nothing, and our treasure and our lives are thrown away. The first thing you have to look to is the efficiency of your legislative machine. They say Parliament is on its trial. In my judgment it

has long been on its trial, and I am not at all sure that the jury have not left the box and are not now beginning to consider their verdict.

What sort of efficiency was there at the War Office? In commerce and industry there was room for energetic action by the Government. In education we were lagging behind other nations. On the temperance question a Government might do much if it made up its mind to deal firmly with the problem, "disregarding the fanatics on both sides and careless of even sacrificing its majority."

As to the war he would not sanction overtures to the Boers; they would be only misunderstood. He advocated not an active but a passive policy of peace. The obstacle to settlement was not a hope on the part of the Boers of regaining their independence The real difficulty was as to amnesty. Lord Kitchener was in favour of amnesty and Lord Milner against it; he sided with Lord Kitchener. The Boers were to be our fellow-subjects; the two combatants had to settle down and live together in South Africa in such harmony as might be. He was therefore in favour of as large and liberal an amnesty as was possible in the final settlement.

"I am quite aware," he concluded, "that my policy does not run on Party lines, but it is not to Party that I appeal. I appeal to Cæsar—from Parliament with its half-hearted but overwhelming majority for the Government and its distracted and disunited Opposition, I appeal to the silent but supreme tribunal which shapes and controls in the long run the destinies of our people, the tribunal of public opinion and common sense. If that fail us, we are lost indeed, and I know of nothing else that remains to avail us."

The one plain fact that emerged from all this eloquence was that Lord Rosebery would not work with the Liberal Party save on his own terms. The speech could not be without serious meaning of a wider kind, but exactly what it meant was not clear. On the whole it would seem probable that Lord Rosebery was antedating by some twenty years the Coalition idea of Mr. Lloyd

George. Despite the superficial differences between the two men, their minds worked on not dissimilar lines. Both belonged to the class of workmen who complain of their tools, both were of the authoritarian turn ; and Efficiency, so far as can be judged from Lord Rosebery's oracular exposition, was much the same as "Government by Experts." The Chesterfield speech reeks with faint suggestions of the afterwards familiar ideas of regimentation, paternal government, a land made for heroes by bureaucrats—Parliament meanwhile being disarmed by arrangements between Party leaders. But whether Lord Rosebery looked for the materials of his coalition to the right, among the industrialist Conservatives, or to the left, among the non-Socialistic working classes, is not easily conjecturable. He may have been led to believe, by the enthusiasm of Perks and Fowler, that a large number of Nonconformist supporters of the Government could be induced to withdraw, as they did in fact a few years later in revenge for the Education Act, from the Conservative Party. But they alone could not make up a new Liberal Party, and indeed, in the decay of Nonconformity, could hardly supply the secessions inevitable if Imperialism became the watchword.

Such remoter considerations were, however, little regarded at the moment. The practical politician, interested only in passing incidents, was naturally engrossed with the slate-cleaning advice. Sir Henry Fowler, Sir Edward Grey, and Mr. Asquith had all occupied seats on the Chesterfield platform ; could that mean anything but that they, too, were weary of the old incantations and anxious to wear something more modish than the fly-blown phylacteries? The language of Lord Rosebery, vague as to its deeper meaning, was clear on this point. He had dealt in contempt, and almost in insult, with the past of Liberalism, and not merely with its recent past. Obviously, therefore, Efficiency, whatever it might be, was something most different from Liberalism as it had been known for at least half a generation. What exactly was it?

Campbell-Bannerman determined to have the matter out. He sought an interview with Lord Rosebery, and asked outright what was meant by the Chesterfield declaration. With perfect politeness Lord Rosebery in effect put this counter-question: "What the deuce is that to do with you?" Sir Henry, he pointed out, was not the keeper of his conscience. He had left the Liberal Party; he was no longer in communion with it, and had no intention of resuming touch. Ireland alone would be enough to block the way, since he was now against Home Rule in any shape or form. On the question of the war, his chief differences with Sir Henry seemed to relate to terminology. He agreed that some methods of the Government—the formation of concentration camps, burning of farms, destruction of towns, and so forth—were injudicious, though he would not admit that they were "barbarous." But, however little their views might be separated in substance, he would not admit the possibility of co-operation. That was out of the question. Lord Spencer received a similar answer. "So there we are," wrote Sir Henry to a friend,[1] "and the country has been led to believe that a noble patriot is being kept out of a beneficent public life by a knot of jealous curmudgeons."

Campbell-Bannerman, therefore, ceased for the time his efforts towards conciliation. Indeed, his own excellent temper was not a little ruffled, if not by Lord Rosebery himself, by Lord Rosebery's followers. We find him describing as "dammed egotism and impertinence" Sir Edward Grey's demand that he should accept Lord Rosebery's views on the war, on the penalty of Sir Edward's repudiation of his leadership.[2] This was only a rather extreme example of a very general course of conduct. Mr. Asquith, though warmly approving the Chesterfield speech on the public platform, did not commit himself to actual hostility to the nominal leader; but others were less reticent, and it soon became clear that what was required of Campbell-Bannerman was

[1] *Life of Lord Ripon* (Lucien Wolf).
[2] *Life of Sir William Harcourt* (A. G. Gardiner).

simply surrender. Unwilling as he was to push matters to extremity, Campbell-Bannerman's sleepy virility would not brook treatment so contemptuous. Practically deserted by men of his own standing, and told even by Mr. Lloyd George that "if Lord Rosebery really becomes leader, and takes the country with him, we shall all be delighted, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman will be as pleased as anyone," he determined to stand to his guns, to take his own line at the opening of the session of 1902, and to let the Liberal Imperialists do what seemed best to them.

Parliament had met in January 1902. At Liverpool in February, Lord Rosebery again spoke. Though wholly opposed to Home Rule, he said he was prepared for much "devolution"—and this "in a national direction"—so as to relieve an over-burdened Parliament. Campbell-Bannerman may possibly have seen in this admission a wave of the olive-branch. Or he may have desired to compel Lord Rosebery to re-state in public what he had already imparted in a private interview. Whatever the motive, he put forward, in a speech at Leicester, a fishing inquiry. After rejecting the "clean slate" policy, declining to "erase from the tablets any article of the Liberal faith," and refusing in particular to be a party to the abandonment of Home Rule, he added: "I do not know down to this moment of speaking whether Lord Rosebery speaks to me from the interior of our tabernacle or from some vantage ground outside. I put that question publicly to him a month ago, but he does not answer it, and I frankly say I do not think it is quite fair to me not to do so."

Lord Rosebery had, of course, already answered the question. But it is one thing to say in private conversation that one never, no never, will take a certain course, and quite another thing to make an equivalent declaration from a public platform. The memoirs of the time are strewn with furious interchanges between men who afterwards worked together on the most amicable terms, and who never ceased to proclaim themselves in amity with all Liberal mankind. Thus Mr. John Morley

is found angry now with Lord Rosebery, now with Harcourt, now sympathising with the first on his hard fate in being yoked with the second and now discussing with the second how the first might be most effectually countered. Yet Mr. Morley was able to join the Party that won without being seriously embarrassed by any public words to be quoted against him by the Party that lost. With Lord Rosebery, sometimes so explosively candid, the case was different. When Campbell-Bannerman asked him, in effect, to burn his boats he at once applied the torch in the sight of all. In a letter which appeared in the Press immediately after the Leicester speech he solemnly reaffirmed his decision. "Speaking pontifically within his tabernacle last night," he said, "Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman anathematised my declarations on the clean slate and Home Rule. It is obvious that our views on the war and its methods are not less discordant. I remain, therefore, outside his tabernacle, but not, I think, in solitude." He added, "at this moment of definite separation," that nobody appreciated better the honest and well-intentioned devotion of Sir Henry to what he conceived to be the interest of the Liberal Party.

For some time after his definite excommunication Campbell-Bannerman was sent to Coventry. No Roseberian could be found to sit by him, or exchange more than the most frigid nod. In the country, however, this sentiment was by no means reproduced. The National Liberal Federation, while welcoming the "powerful stimulus" given by Lord Rosebery to the policy of settlement in South Africa, rejoiced in the "practical unanimity of the Party," and called on all Liberals in the House of Commons to support Campbell-Bannerman. Angered by this expression of confidence, the Imperialists replied by the formation of the Liberal (Imperial) League, with Lord Rosebery as President, and Sir E. Grey, Sir H. Fowler, and Mr. Asquith as Vice-Presidents. The most violent shock tactics were adopted to hurl Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman from the leadership and, left without support beyond that

given, in an unofficial capacity, by Sir William Harcourt, his position was indeed forlorn. Nearly all the ability of the Party, old and young, was opposed to him ; and his own following, confined to the Back Benches, was either too tame or too wild to be of much use. In debating power and platform cleverness the Imperialists possessed a mighty superiority, and they used it without mercy. Lord Rosebery's new friend, Alfred Harmsworth, now mobilised the whole of his already formidable newspaper power against the hapless Liberal leader. Day by day he was described in large type as "the incubus," and no opportunity was omitted to impress on Liberals in the country that their only chance of getting into popular favour once more was to depose a clumsy and uninteresting pretender, and put in his place the brilliant patrician and tried patriot.

But, riddled with satire, overborne in argument, betrayed and bedevilled as Campbell-Bannerman was, he retained the confidence of the great mass of the Party in the country. The confidence was no doubt limited. On the question of the war, probably a majority questioned his methods, disliked his views, and thought ill of his way of expressing them. But, with so general a determination to see the war through, these things were of relatively small importance ; and, after all, the war was not going to last for ever. Some instinct seemed to tell the average Liberal that the general interests of the Party were safer in the hands of the hum-drum "C.-B.," who said things that everybody could understand, and who had always said the same things, than in those of the eloquent President of the Liberal League, who had repudiated all his past and offered only a clean slate for the future. The event might have been different had Lord Rosebery reasserted a definite claim to the leadership. But, though for nights running poor Campbell-Bannerman fulfilled the part of Wat Tyler, and was stabbed in the back, Lord Rosebery never acted King Richard. A gesture might have brought the crowd to his side, but the gesture was never made, at least in the direct way the ordinary man understands. Once

again Lord Rosebery was not master of "the Tom, Dick, and Harry business," and Tom, Dick, and Harry, after a certain period of bovine contemplation, decided that the business would not do.

The opportunity for a decisive stroke remained open so long as the war continued. But the war abruptly ended, and with peace the chance of the Liberal Imperialists had gone. The country generally turned with eagerness to the excitement of the Coronation of King Edward, and when that interesting transaction was over a new order of political interests made the Liberal League a forlorn anachronism. It was that deadest of all things, a topicality out of date. The natural reaction was hastened by artificial stimulus. Mr. Chamberlain had divined that his war-time popularity must be paid for unless he could divert the public mind from the miscalculations and disasters of the war and, though there were other and higher motives, the desire of providing a new issue was undoubtedly potent in deciding him to bring forward his famous plan to Prussianise the British Empire.

The Tariff Reform controversy, bringing together the fragments of the Liberal Party as nothing else could have done, was fatal to Lord Rosebery as a pretender to supreme place, and soon made it a matter of little moment whether he rejoined the Party or remained out of communion with it. The new ferment, as usual, produced new ability, and the time arrived with astonishing rapidity when Lord Rosebery aroused no more serious interest, so far as the hardened politicians were concerned, than a scientific soldier of the Renaissance might have felt in some perfect exponent of the old arts of the tournament.

Before proceeding to this new chapter, note may be taken of the only considerable interventions of Lord Rosebery on subjects unconnected with the Boer War, and the state of the Liberal Party. He spoke in favour of the first Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902, though his enthusiasm afterwards seemed to undergo some diminution ; and at Plymouth, early in 1903, he urged, in the

interests of his policy of Efficiency, that Lord Kitchener should be made Secretary of State for War.

> Kitchener is the Hercules who alone can carry out the necessary reforms. There is no need for the head of our War Office to be a member of the Cabinet. He need only attend those meetings which have to do with his department. It is in the power of the Sovereign to summon any Privy Councillor to the Cabinet for any particular purpose, and there is no reason why he should not adopt that course in regard to Lord Kitchener. There are precedents for it, but I will not take up time in dwelling on them. When you have a great reform to carry out and when you have a great man at hand to do it, for God's sake drop precedent and come to business.

There is in both the manner and the matter of this suggestion a proleptic suggestion of Mr. Lloyd George, and even of Mr. Horatio Bottomley. The great nobleman was not free from the illusions of the demagogue; and it is strongly to be suspected that "efficiency" was only another name for "business government." To imagine that the Board of Trade is somehow more efficient if one calls it the Ministry of Commerce, or that the work of an office will be better done when it is turned over to an unfamiliar hand, a politician doing the work of a soldier, and a soldier doing the work of a politician, is one of the besetting weaknesses of the kind of clever man Lord Rosebery was.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LAST REFUSAL

The Tariff Reform Controversy—Lord Rosebery's Attitude—Arguments against Chamberlain Scheme—Attack on Party System—Liberal Hopes of his Return—Home Rule the Obstacle—"Under that Banner I will not Fight"—Deserted by Liberal Imperialists.

ONE MORE opportunity—and possibly the greatest of his political life—came to Lord Rosebery before he settled down in the character, to use his own excellent phrase, of a "male dowager."

In May 1903, Mr. Chamberlain brought forward his proposals for the abandonment of Free Trade and the negotiation of preferential tariffs between the Mother Country and the oversea Dominions. The ensuing controversy produced a complete change in the position of Parties. Unionism, so seeming solid, was rent in twain; Liberalism, lately a nebula of whirling confusion, a mere congregation of warring incompatibilities, was restored as by miracle to definite organisation and intelligent life. In view of the new danger, old differences were forgotten, and there was the fullest disposition to welcome Lord Rosebery back to the Party, and even, after a due interval, to the chief command. For, if it had been practicable, a Rosebery leadership would have had great advantages, in the peculiar circumstances of the moment. As things fell out, the actual secessions from the parliamentary Unionist Party were not numerous, but a great schism was avoided only by the strategy of Mr. Balfour, who preferred confounding the spirit of his following to dividing its substance. He was successful mainly because the gulf between Hatfield Conservatism (even modified

by Birmingham) and Liberalism under Campbell-Bannerman was so considerable that nothing short of Mr. Winston Churchill's agile and confident audacity could face the leap. Had Lord Rosebery led the Free Trade cause, the result might well have been otherwise. Men like the Duke of Devonshire might quite possibly have regarded him as a double security—a guarantee against Protection on the one hand and against "Socialism" on the other; and there would have been at least a chance of a considerable rectification of the loss of equilibrium which had taken place in 1886. It is, indeed, by no means improbable that, if Lord Rosebery had frankly thrown in his lot with the Liberals at this time, and shown with some industry, a moiety of the political capacity with which his followers credited him, the whole history of the next twenty years would have been different. There would have been no Budget of 1909, no constitutional struggle, nothing more than the normal Irish problem, only a very limited Lloyd George, and perhaps no Great War. No statesman was ever offered more splendid possibilities than Lord Rosebery in 1903. But he refused every advance. Emissary after emissary tried without success to tempt him from his lonely furrow, and at last the Party had to be content with such help as he condescended to give in his capacity of free lance.

At the outset, indeed, he does not seem to have been quite decided even on the merits of the question. Long years before John Morley had been a little scandalised by small signs of fiscal heresy, and though he had accepted the Manchester philosophy on its economic side, the whole tenour of his mind was naturally at variance with the pure doctrine of Cobden. Lord Rosebery was soon to show that he had read widely and understandingly, and had not, like Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Lloyd George, merely picked up his political economy by the way. But his prepossessions were not a little at variance with his intellectual convictions, and his first instinct, apparently, was to welcome the Chamberlain scheme, simply because it purported to

be a step forward to Imperial unification. On the other hand he had the least possible love for Mr. Chamberlain ; there never had been much sympathy between the Scottish aristocrat and the most English and middle class of middle-class Englishmen ; and since they had become " two of a trade " Imperialistically, some artistic jealousy probably further embittered a natural antagonism.

Accordingly, in his first criticism, uttered before the Barnsley Chamber of Commerce on May 19th, Lord Rosebery seemed to speak with some uncertainty. This was not, he said, a matter of Party politics. It was " not right to reject, hastily and without mature consideration, any plan offered on high authority and based on large experience, for really cementing and uniting the British Empire." On the other hand Mr. Chamberlain was not right in suggesting that Great Britain did not do much for her Colonies ; the whole burden of Imperial defence (then costing seventy millions a year) rested on the Mother Country. The real question was—would reciprocal tariffs bind the Empire more closely ? Would the perpetual pressure of Colonial interests on the Mother Country altogether add to the harmony of relations ? Could those relations be materially modified for the better without having direct Colonial representation in the home Government ?

Lord Rosebery declined to commit himself to an uncompromisingly Free Trade position :

> Under a system of Free Trade every branch of industry does not prosper. I am interested in the land industry, and I do not think that has prospered particularly under Free Trade. I dismiss my own case, for a landlord is not a subject of interest except to himself ; but there are classes connected with the land more important than the landlord, and it cannot be denied that under a system of Free Trade large tracts of land have been turned out of cultivation, that our own food supply has been diminished, that the population which was once reared in the rural districts is reared there no longer. I am not a person who believes that Free Trade is part of the Sermon on the Mount, and that we ought to receive it in all its rigidity as a divinely appointed dispensation. . . . But it must be remembered that if we quarrel with customers who give us two-thirds or possibly three-quarters of our trade, in order to oblige a customer

who gives us a quarter or a third—we shall not be doing a wise thing, even in the interest of our Colonial customer.

It was, in short, a carefully balanced speech, with perhaps a little bias in favour of the new proposals. That they were new would be a first recommendation, for Lord Rosebery, widely as he might differ in externals from his friend Lord Northcliffe, was scarcely less attracted by mere novelty, and his enthusiasm for the "clean slate" was somewhat akin to the great newspaper proprietor's dislike of seeing the same sort of paper "make-up" for long together. Mr. Chamberlain could not claim the seer of Barnbougle as a convert. But he had certainly suggested perfect openness to conviction.

A week or two later Lord Rosebery's tone had changed. The violence of Liberal agitation may have left him unmoved, but the signs of a serious split in the Conservative Party did much to clarify his thoughts and, in June, before the faithful of the Liberal League, he delivered himself of what was hailed as a masterly exposition of the fallacies of the Chamberlain scheme. Mr. Asquith declared that he had stated "the whole ground of Liberal objection," and Sir Henry Fowler described the speech as "a trumpet note to which the whole Party would respond."

After his admissions at Barnsley Lord Rosebery could not argue *simpliciter* as a Free Trader. He repeated that Free Trade was made for man, and not man for Free Trade, and that he was not averse from inquiry. But the burden of proof was on the appellants, and he left no doubt as to his own view of the difficulties of their task.

First, was it true, as Mr. Chamberlain alleged, that Free Trade had failed? With shrinking trade, a diminished revenue, a population on the verge of poverty, the country would long ago have reviewed the whole question. But in nine years the income of the classes assessed under the income-tax had risen by fifty-seven millions and foreign trade had shown an enormous and continuous expansion.

Secondly, what would be the effect of a tax on food, accompanied, in accordance with the singular "pledge" of Mr. Chamberlain, by a rise in wages which would more than compensate for the enhanced price? The effect must be an increase in the cost of British manufactured goods, and consequently, other things being equal, a decline in foreign trade.

Thirdly, how could the idea of the German Zollverein be applied to the British Empire, with its immense distances? Tariffs, to be fair, must be adjusted to the mileage between the Mother Country and the various food-producing Colonies; India must be more favoured than Canada, and Australia more favoured than India. Such a complication made a "scientific tariff" almost an impossibility.

Fourthly, why should Great Britain be denied the liberty of that free choice regarding fiscal methods which was allowed to the other parts of the Empire? The Empire subsisted, and could only subsist, on the fullest liberty of the Dominions to conduct their trade and encourage their manufactures as they pleased. But surely the very centre of the Empire, the country responsible mainly for the burden of its defence, could not be deprived of a similar freedom.

But suppose, fifthly, that the scheme were carried into operation, and that wheat-growing in the Colonies were immensely stimulated by a tariff against foreign-grown wheat. Suppose great tracts of virgin soil in Canada were placed under wheat by virtue of the promises of the home Government. Canada was not immune from natural disasters, and some year it might happen that she could not send her supply. In such circumstance no Government could close the ports of Great Britain to free imports from anywhere, and once opened the ports could not be closed again. Canada, saddled with a ruined industry, would then have an enormous grievance against the Mother Country, which could not conduce to the better relations between the Empire.

Finally, it must be remembered that the preferential

system would be primarily directed against the United States. What effect would that fact have on the understanding with America which was a great object of British policy?

I speak entirely from the point of view of an Imperialist who has been at work on this question for some three-and-twenty years and who has naturally not overlooked the bond of union which might be cemented if a Zollverein was possible or practicable. I confess that we who have worked have regarded with the greatest pride and satisfaction the moral union, the union of sympathy, which has sprung up within the bounds of our Empire, and which produced that great burst of loyalty in the various parts of the Empire at the commencement of the South African war. But now we feel that it has been placed at hazard by forcing the running prematurely, and hastening on a consummation for which the Empire is by no means ripe. What the effect will be on the stability of the Ministry or even on the welfare of Parties, is to me—important as these circumstances are—comparatively a matter of indifference. What may happen to the Ministry or to this or that Party, is merely a ripple on the sea of time. It cannot in reality affect the great historical course of the nation. What I do tremble to see imperilled is the delicate, the world-wide organization of the British Empire, that majestic structure, the secular structure on which all the best part of Great Britain—aye, all lovers of progress and freedom in the world outside Great Britain—have laid their surest and their safest hopes.

This was Lord Rosebery's chief contribution to the controversy; but during the distracted years 1904 and 1905, when Mr. Balfour was engaged in his long duel with Mr. Chamberlain, he intervened with some frequency, and there was no discernible difference between his arguments and those of Mr. Asquith, who, on the Free Trade side, was the hero of the whole business. He went so far as to say that it was "criminal" on the part of the Tariff Reformers to "set our people balancing between the necessities of life and the maintenance of the Empire";[1] declared that there was danger to the Imperial fabric in the clash of pecuniary interest; maintained that on the one side were the people and on the other the aristocracy, journalism, and wealth of the country, and condemned as the most loathsome of all tyrannies that of "corrupt and corrupting wealth."[2]

[1] At a meeting of the Liberal League, February 29, 1904.
[2] At Glasgow.

But Lord Rosebery, attached to no substantial political organisation—for the seed of the Liberal League had already proved to have found but stony ground—could not expect to command the attention given to men who might well, in a few months, be directing the affairs of the nation; and after it was clear that he could not be regarded as *papabile*, there was naturally little disposition to accept his utterances as those of a Pope. It will perhaps never be known what were his real thoughts and intentions at this time. Possibly he did not himself quite know. The probability is that he oscillated between two feelings of almost equal strength. There are men who are wholly weary of consciousness and who yet shrink with terror from the thought of annihilation. Such, in a political sense, seems to have been Lord Rosebery's state of mind. He was repelled by the realities of political life, but could not stoically take the simple remedy of walking out of it. At one moment, like Claudio, he would talk bravely of encountering darkness as a bride and hugging it in his arms. But when the moment of dread decision came he shuddered at the prospect of his spirit residing in the "thick-ribbed ice" of popular oblivion, and began to think that the "weariest and most loathed" political life was a paradise to what he feared to death.

Some such conflict must be assumed to reconcile the inconsistencies of his various pronouncements. In the autumn of 1905, when the end of the Balfour Government was obviously near, Mr. Alfred Stead published a book called *Great Japan*, and with his usual kindness to authors Lord Rosebery consented to contribute a "foreword." He was apparently struck with the success with which Japan, while decreeing the forms of constitutionalism, had evaded its realities, and had perpetuated a virtual despotism under the guise of a parliamentary system. The fact inspired him, in the interest of "efficiency," to make an attack on Party, which, he said, people in Great Britain, especially people in high places, worshipped as a god:

It is considered as inevitable as the fog, yet its operation blights efficiency. It keeps out of employment a great many men of precious ability. It puts into place not the fittest, but the most eligible from the Party point of view. . . that is, very often, the worst. Efficiency implies the rule of the fittest. Party means the rule of something else—not of the unfittest, but of the few fit, the accidentally not unfit, and the glaringly unfit. I do not seek to abolish Party. I recognise it as part of our moral climate; but we must ever bear in mind that when we aim at efficiency we shall be handicapped by this formidable encumbrance. We regard our Parties as interesting groups of gladiators. Our firmest faith seems to be that one will do worse than the other, so we maintain the other. We know too well that our Ministers, however great the ardour and the freshness with which they set to work, will soon be lost in the labyrinthine mazes of parliamentary discussions, and that whatever energy they can preserve when they emerge must be devoted to struggling for existence on provincial platforms.

From a detached philosopher such meditations on the Party system, which is after all a local thing, little more than two centuries old, would be far from surprising. Coming as they did from a Minister in retirement, who had in his time played the Party game with apparent conviction, and who might still be conceived as leading a Party again, they suggested that Gladstone was perhaps not far wrong in his early diagnosis of "a vein of foreign matter which runs straight across a clear and vigorous intellect and a high-toned character."[1] A political theorist is free to range the whole world in quest of the perfect polity, to borrow one idea from France, to allege that in another respect they order things better in America, or even to adopt a hint from Siam or Dahomey. For a British statesman there are but two courses, to accept the Party system and say no more about it, or to set out energetically to destroy it. Lord Rosebery did neither. He grumbled at the tools he had used and might still use, but clearly indicated that he had not even the wish to change them.

That he did still regard himself at this time as a practical statesman, and not a mere theorist like the Bolingbroke of later life, is evident from the tone of several of his speeches on matters of very concrete and immediate interest. Thus on April 13, 1905, he set

[1] *Life of Sir William Harcourt* (A. G. Gardiner).

forth a Liberal programme of social reform, education, housing, temperance, and administrative efficiency; and, speaking by the light of a "somewhat bilious experience," he said he could not omit from the calculations and possibilities of a new Liberal Government the dead brick wall of the House of Lords :

> My belief is that after the first year of this new Government you will find the House of Lords as resolutely, aggressively, and defiantly Tory as it has ever been. I know it is very galling to the young Liberals to be even reminded of the existence of the House of Lords, but it is an inevitable fact, and though it may bow to an outburst of national feeling it will take the first opportunity when the nation is not excited of trimming and mangling, and if possible rejecting your measures.

At Stourbridge, on October 25th in the same year, he expressed grave doubts as to the wisdom of the policy of the Entente Cordiale, and the bargain over Morocco. His friends, he said, had swallowed the policy of the Government whole. "They had taken it at a gulp. I was not able to masticate all of it, but that was a matter only for me and my political digestion." However he had a certain feeling of satisfaction. The Entente meant continuity of policy, an object for which he had striven for twenty years and which at last seemed nearly to be realised. A second-rate foreign policy which was continuous was better than a first-rate foreign policy which was not continuous. "I cannot understand," he added, true to his old Germanophile instincts, "why friendship with France should involve such violent polemics with Germany as now rage between the two countries, and which do not, I believe, represent the feeling of the two nations, though they may represent the feelings of some or all of the Governments. I do view these polemics as a serious danger to peace, as poisonously influencing the two nations and the growing generations of the two nations. Therefore I am one of those who deprecate most sincerely the view which appears to prevail in some quarters that cordial relations with France mean irreconcilable animosity to Germany."

Up to the very end of this fateful year a doubt hung over Lord Rosebery's intentions. At Edinburgh in

October he took special pains to be cordial to Campbell-Bannerman, and when Mr. Balfour was seen to be tottering there was both hope and desire for re-union, though by this time it was generally recognised that the man who had borne the ungrateful burden of the Opposition leadership so long could not be decently displaced. A heavy price, however, would have been cheerfully paid for Lord Rosebery's return to a position of definite helpfulness and responsibility, for the Rosebery legend had survived, without too much tarnish, a display of waywardness and inconsequence which would have ruined any other man. It was still felt, perhaps justly, that only sufficient stimulus was wanted to bring out qualities of which only a mere hint, it was believed, had hitherto been given. It was remembered that a specially sun-loving nature had been chilled first by the adverse atmosphere of the House of Lords, secondly by long exclusion from office, and thirdly by the bitterness of a disputed succession. In the warmth of the new prosperity and harmony the real Rosebery might expand, and make good that promise which had caused Gladstone, nearly twenty years before, to speak of him as the man of the future. At no time was the general feeling in the Party more friendly to its former leader, and he himself seemed to be tending to a return to the Liberal fold. At the start of his tour of Cornwall he spoke in a vein indistinguishable from that of any of his lieutenants of the Liberal League, and they, by this time, had dropped any pretence of a separation of policy or interest from the rest of the Party. But so incalculable was Lord Rosebery in this later stage of his career that it is impossible to decide whether he had in fact entertained the possibility of co-operating with a Campbell-Bannerman Government. We are no longer in a universe in which the ordinary relation exists between premise and conclusion. We are in the faëry world of a rich man's whims, where gravitation and friction vary from hour to hour, and a pound may weigh sixteen ounces at eight in the morning and sixteen tons at two in the afternoon.

As late as June 1905, Lord Rosebery had made a reference to Home Rule which, though sufficiently emphatic, was far less decisive than many of his former utterances on the same subject. After expressing his belief that the Free Trade Unionists could be brought over to Liberalism which was not of a "narrow, fanatical, vindictive, or retrograde type," he declared that as to Home Rule the predominant partner had not yet been won over, so there was "no present possibility of establishing or attempting to establish a Parliament in Dublin."

This view had of course been taken by the Liberal Party in general. It was understood that the next Parliament, elected to secure Free Trade—assuming, of course, a Liberal victory—could not properly introduce a measure of Home Rule. But at Stirling Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman undertook "to propose a considerable measure of devolution—a measure which the most ardent Irish Nationalist might accept, because it would not be inconsistent with, and would lead up to Home Rule." Nothing was said as to a "present possibility of establishing or attempting to establish a Parliament in Dublin"; indeed such possibility was expressly excluded. Lord Rosebery, however, assumed that the Prime Minister had pledged the Party again to Home Rule, and at Bodmin he declared: "Under that banner I will not fight."

A meeting of the Liberal League was immediately called, and Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Asquith, and Mr. Haldane at once announced their disagreement with Lord Rosebery's interpretation of the Stirling pledge. Their arguments were in vain. Lord Rosebery did not quarrel with their reading; perhaps they had received private explanations, enabling them to reconcile their "known principles" with adherence to Sir Henry's declaration; but his opinion was unchanged, and his own interpretation had been adopted by the Nationalist Press, which declared that every vote given for Campbell-Bannerman was a vote given for Home Rule.

This time Lord Rosebery was left completely solitary in his furrow. The Liberal Imperialist leaders, fond

as friends but famishing as politicians, turned away with handshakes and heavy hearts, entered the tabernacle and, after the failure of their little attempt to assassinate the high priest, accepted his cheerful bounty and rather contemptuous forgiveness. Some of the four Vice-Presidents of the Liberal League had borne high names in the past, and were to add to their lustre in the future; but their conduct in 1905 was a little unsightly. They had no sooner left one chief than they began to plot against another, too manly for intimidation and too magnanimous for revenge.

Of all the surviving vendettists of the 'nineties Campbell-Bannerman alone made a wholly worthy figure in the hour of power and victory. The next best, after all, was cut by Lord Rosebery. He had shown himself impracticable. He had extinguished in all but a few enthusiasts the last hope founded on the lavish display of his surface brilliance and the few strong hints of the real stuff which was thought to underlay them, and which, perhaps, in more favouring circumstances, might have ranked him with the greatest of Ministers. But, if he could be charged with perversity and infirmity of purpose, his honour could not be impeached, and if the sturdy Campbell-Bannerman waved him aside with unconcern, the gesture had no touch of contempt.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LONELY ORACLE

Lord Rosebery as Detached Critic—"The Retired Raven"—Attacks on Former Colleagues—Growing Divergence from Liberal Policy—Fear of Socialism—The "Revolution" of the Budget of 1909—Disappoints Conservative Party—His Scheme of Reform for House of Lords—Failure to Maintain Decisive Attitude—Last Protest against Parliament Act—Withdrawal from Parliamentary Life.

THE CHORUS in the Japanese classic drama generally consists of two men in boxes hung mid-way between ceiling and floor on opposite sides of the stage. They explain with an air of superior intelligence what is already sufficiently obvious to the most stupid playgoer, but invariably omit enlightenment of a really dubious point. When the action becomes tense they scream their comments in such a way as to make it difficult to give undivided attention to the stage. Finally they relapse into lethargy, beer, eels, rice, and repudiation of responsibility for what they seem to have concluded is a stupid show. "Good people," one imagines them to be saying, "we had hopes of this play at first, and did our best to help it on, while we thought it had some sort of chance. But the stage is not what it was, and really, after that last piece of barn-storming—well, the part of a wise man is to eat his lunch and say nothing."

Between 1906 and 1911 Lord Rosebery played somewhat the part of this chorus, showing what may be perhaps best described as a topical irrelevance. His interventions were perfectly timed, but essentially anachronistic. His comments had always a point, but were seldom to the point. His speeches, as speeches, were interesting, perhaps even better in form than at

any other time ; but as practical contributions to political thought they were nothing, or rather less than nothing, since one speech often contradicted another. It seemed as though the last control had snapped, and the infinite contradictions of Lord Rosebery's temper and intellect and circumstances, of his instincts and his acquired mental habits, were allowed unrestricted play.

In his study of Napoleon at St. Helena, Lord Rosebery speaks of the difficulty of ascertaining the Emperor's genuine and sincere views, of deciding when he was deluding himself, when he was trying to delude others, or when he was only talking at random for talking's sake. In his own self-ordained St. Helena Lord Rosebery presented an equally puzzling problem. What was the outcome of serious thought, what of fixed irritation that the political world went on so unconcernedly without him, what of mere incidental liver or insomnia, can hardly be determined. Most people know how middle-aged politically minded gentlemen without occupation talk in the morning. Happily talent for articulate speech in public is not common in this class, and the autocrat of the breakfast-table seldom explains to the outside world how surely and swiftly the ruin of the Empire must follow any small governmental proceeding of which he happens not to approve. All human beings in a state of freedom have this natural tendency to talk nonsense, and the more gifted the man the greater, generally, the nonsense. It is only responsibility—the call of a wife, or a child, or a Party, or a master, or a cause, or a book—that keeps people down to the rather painful task of thinking temperately and coherently. Without responsibility their minds are the sport of every trifle. A fast cab-horse or a club bore (as in the case of Herbert Spencer) will colour for a moment their whole view of human nature and destiny. They will be Republicans to-day because the newspapers print too many pictures of a royal wedding ; absolutists to-morrow because the electricians have gone on strike ; anarchists on Thursday because some Government inspector has called for a form. All this

is of little consequence so long as the only audience is a wife and the marmalade. But when the autocrat is a man of genius, with a great knack of melodious speech, and insists on asking the world to his breakfast-table, the spectacle is not a little tragic ; and no more mournful task could well be than that of following Lord Rosebery through these dismal years of complete political isolation—years during which, by a bitter satire, he accomplished some of his best literary work.

For the trouble was by no means a decline in power ; it was merely the want of effective purpose. Again and again we find, even in his political utterances, flashes of true insight, and his pen as a biographical writer was never more sure, shrewd, and witty. So long as he was tied down to a task the machine of his intellect still worked true and strong. Left to itself it raced and fretted. Something of Chatham's character —"haughty, impossible, anomalous"—is to be discerned in his biographer and remote connection. A theatrical quality is common to the two men. In Lord Rosebery's early days it was concealed with great art, but it was there. We have seen how secretly he read, in order that his learning should seem the greater for the mondaine ease with which he carried it. We have seen how carefully, yet how unostentatiously, the Midlothian campaign was stage-managed so as to keep in the centre of brightest illumination the figure of the young Lord. We have seen with what histrionic effect he arranged his political entrances and exits, his set speeches, his bursts of declamation, his pregnant asides. We have seen with what dramatic devices he sought to avoid office in 1892 ; sincere enough, no doubt, but if a man really wished to refuse a place he could do so as well by remaining in London as by going off to the most inaccessible wilds of Scotland.

This theatricality, restrained to reasonable limits in a position of responsibility, expanded as contact with realities diminished. In the first years of his retirement Lord Rosebery surrounded himself with the pomp of an exiled Stuart, and so long as he still retained a small

group of courtiers, treated them, in his capacity of pretender, with much more haughtiness and much less intimacy than when he had ruled as king. To use his own phrase regarding Chatham, he "deliberately enveloped himself in an opaque fog of mystery," and perhaps there may have been something in Harcourt's half-jesting suggestion that this mystery and isolation were actually copied from Chatham. For a time he maintained the phantom state of a Party leader with no Party. The Liberal League continued to meet until 1909, to hear "the croaking of the retired raven on the withered branch;"[1] then, in the midst of the Budget controversy, he resigned the presidency, and it met but once more, to decree its own dissolution. A little later he divested himself of the last trace of relation with Liberalism by leaving the Scottish Liberal Club. The part that now appealed to him was that of the solitary sage, the man of awful wisdom and dread experience, emerging from time to time from his seclusion to admonish a careless world. For a time these appearances impressed. The sombre figure in the House of Lords, with the Sphinx-like eyes and the brow on which "deliberation sat and public care," was for years marked as a portent of some momentous intervention. Its anticipated appearance on a public platform was long sufficient to induce speculations as to new and important political combinations. But in due course it was found that the croak was only a croak, an unusually musical one; the gramophones of the Press ceased to reproduce it in full; and Lord Rosebery, while still far from old as politicians go, seemed to belong to a past as remote as his master Gladstone's.

His speeches and writings during this period testify to the rapid growth of sentiments which, if they were not Conservative, were decidedly anti-Liberal. He began by declaring[2] that, though he owed the Campbell-Bannerman Government neither allegiance nor confidence, "perhaps not even the common courtesies of life," he

[1] Speech at the Annual Meeting of the Liberal League.
[2] March 1907.

desired that it should have a free hand. But in fact nothing that Ministers said or did commanded his appreciation. Himself committed for years to the reform of the House of Lords, he was angrily suspicious of the anti-Lords campaign of the Government, which "wanted to destroy and not to reform." Though he had continually expressed enthusiasm for "the revival of the yeoman class," he attacked with great ferocity the Government's Small Holdings Bill for Scotland. It might be—indeed it was—a very bad Bill. It might be "essentially vicious in principle," "designed only to provide material for a campaign against the House of Lords," and calculated, if put into practice, to "introduce into Scotland the poison bacillus of the Irish agrarian system." But why should it be condemned by Lord Rosebery as "a complete interference with the laws of supply and demand"? For how, by respecting the laws of supply and demand, could any plan of Lord Rosebery's own for the "revival of the yeoman class" be put into operation?

Lord Rosebery had always tended, in fact, if not in profession, to a pseudo-Socialism [1]—to State interference with this or that. Yet now he was moved to abhorrence by the "Socialistic"—by which he possibly meant revolutionary—tendencies of the most middle-class Parliament (for such was that of Campbell-Bannerman) that had come to Westminster since the early 'seventies. He dilated on the unhappy dilemma of the country—Protection on the one side, Home Rule and Socialism on the other. Protection, he agreed, was a danger to the Empire, but if he had to choose between Protection and Socialism he would prefer Protection, because Socialism was "the end of all things." [2]

Stricken by the illness which soon proved fatal, the non-Imperialist Campbell-Bannerman gave way to

[1] I am speaking here and elsewhere of Socialism as a system, and without reference to the "revolutionary" character commonly attributed to it. Socialism is merely the converse of the old Liberal idea of *laissez-faire* now chiefly held by Conservatives.

[2] Meeting of the Liberal League, March 1908.

a man formerly more after Lord Rosebery's heart. But Mr. Asquith's succession to the Premiership did not lessen the antagonism of his old patron. Lord Rosebery had acquiesced in—if he had not personally approved—the Liberal demand for old age pensions. When Mr. Asquith produced an Old Age Pensions Bill, the former chief in the Party which evolved the Newcastle Programme denounced it as "objectionable because non-contributory, financially inopportune, and threatening to the reserve resources on which the country should rely for war."

The Budget of 1909, as a "political and social revolution to be effected without the participation of the people," roused Lord Rosebery to a pitch of hostility which gave rise to momentary expectations of a formal conversion to Conservatism. During the earlier part of the controversy he kept silence, but in September he delivered at Glasgow a speech which had a considerable effect in encouraging the stalwarts of the Conservative Party to destroy the Budget through the House of Lords. The Dukes, whom Mr. Lloyd George had denounced, Lord Rosebery defended as a "poor but honest class." To the "revolution without a popular mandate" which the Budget really was, "inquisitorial, tyrannical, and Socialistic," many heedless persons, he said, would prefer the alternative of Tariff Reform. "The great danger," Lord Rosebery concluded, "is Socialism. Any form of Protection is an evil, but Socialism is the end of all—the negation of faith, of family, of property, of the monarchy, of the Empire. I myself must go a different road—the road of public economy, of strengthening character, the road by which we have built up our strength."

How far Lord Rosebery had gone at this time may be even better seen by the address he had delivered as Chancellor of Glasgow University in June 1908. "I distrust," he said, "a despotism even when exercised in the name of liberty and adorned by the word benevolent, for I know the benevolence to be accidental and the hypocrisy permanent."

The State invites us every day to lean upon it. I seem to hear the wheedling and alluring whisper: "Sound you may be; we bid you be a cripple. Do you see? Be blind. Do you hear? Be deaf. Do you walk? Be not so venturesome. Here is a crutch for one arm; when you get accustomed to it you will soon want another—the sooner the better." The strongest man if encouraged may soon accustom himself to the methods of an invalid; he may train himself to totter or to be fed with a spoon. . . . The lesson of our Scottish teaching was "level up"; the cry of modern teaching is "level down"; "let the Government have a finger in every pie," probing, propping, disturbing. Every day the area for initiative is being narrowed, every day the standing ground for self-reliance is being undermined; every day the public infringes—with the best intentions no doubt—on the individual; the nation is being taken into custody by the State.

We need not enlarge on the inconsistency of these criticisms with Lord Rosebery's impassioned declaration some years before that he wanted to "do something for the people." Every man is free to change his opinions. But it might naturally be supposed that a statesman holding such views of a Government's tendencies would be not only willing but anxious to co-operate in the fullest and most practical sense with the Party opposed to the Government, and it was hastily assumed by Conservative statesmen that they would have the advantage of Lord Rosebery's advocacy when the Budget reached the House of Lords. He had now completed his breach with the Liberal Party, though he would not agree that he had left it. "The Liberal Party," he wrote in a preface to the published version of his Glasgow speech, "has left me." However the case, it was as a wholly free man, and as an expected recruit to the Opposition, that he made his contribution to the Budget debate in the House of Lords on November 23, 1909.

The speech pleased no Party, and perhaps no individual. Lord Rosebery was half sympathetic with the Peers as "victims of taxation without representation," half inclined to question (though embarrassed by his statements when in office as to the rights of the Lords) whether they had not a right to reject the Budget. The tradition as to Finance Bills, he said,

was neither ancient or unbroken ; it had only subsisted since 1832, and was not quite unbroken since. Besides, "abnormal methods of attack permitted abnormal defence." But while thus seeming to justify rejection, Lord Rosebery suddenly turned to advise against it, as playing into the enemy's hands and weakening the power of the House to resist Home Rule. Yet, while holding that the wisest plan was to pass a measure "crude, vindictive, and terrifying to Capital," so that the country, experiencing its action, would choose an anti-Socialist Government, he could not even give his vote for that course. "I cannot," he said, "vote either way."

Lord Curzon not unjustly described his noble colleague as "leading the army up to the walls of the fortress and then abandoning it." Lord Rosebery's attitude was logically consistent. There was nothing mutually destructive in his denunciation of the Budget as predatory and vindictive and his denunciation of Lord Lansdowne's rejection of the Budget as morally justifiable but constitutionally undesirable if not improper. But on such an issue there is little respect for the balancing view ; and this speech marked the definite end of Lord Rosebery's influence. He was no longer, in any quarter, the subject of more than a languid personal interest. The Liberals regarded him as a negligible critic, the Conservatives no longer thought of him as a possible ally.

After the first election of 1910 had brought the Peers face to face with the consequences of their rejection of the Budget, Lord Rosebery, with the gloomy satisfaction of a physician whose neglected warnings are at length justified, brought forward proposals for reforming the House of Lords on the basis that the possession of a Peerage should no longer give the right to sit and vote in the Upper Chamber. Time and again he had made suggestions for a leavening of the hereditary principle. With a pardonable if injudicious pride he now introduced them once more, and supported them with the familiar arguments. He was heard in

savage gloom. No men like to be told, when feeling poorly, that they have only themselves to blame ; and there was no answering cheer when Lord Rosebery, allowing his voice to rise in peroration level, informed the Peers that the choice was with them—they might do the country a service greater than any since that of the Barons of Runnymede, or they might " cling to obsolete privileges and await in decrepitude their doom."

The resolutions were passed, if with a bad grace, but this took the matter no further forward for the moment. The death of King Edward interrupted the constitutional struggle, and the attempt to achieve a settlement by conference followed. Lord Rosebery expressed, with his usual felicity, a general desire when he referred, at a meeting of the county authorities of Midlothian, to the King's death. " Is it too much," he asked, " to hope that King Edward, the promoter of peace through his life, may have bequeathed the great legacy of peace at his death ? May we not hope that by his death and the solemn communion of Parties that has taken place at Westminster Hall he has left peace even in the politics of this country ? "

Appointment as chief of the mission to Vienna to announce the accession of George V further diverted Lord Rosebery's attention from politics, and it was not until after the failure of the conference and the second dissolution that he resumed his part of " croaking chorus." His speeches at Manchester and Edinburgh illustrated his old sense of topicality in its degeneration. The papers were talking about the new Liberalism encroaching on personal liberty ; Lord Rosebery talked in the note, but with something more than the melody, of the papers. Some of the papers professed to believe that Mr. John Redmond, who had collected forty thousand pounds, partly in Canada, for the Nationalist funds, was on that account a danger to the Commonwealth; Lord Rosebery, too, talked about " Irish dictation subsidised by American gold." Lastly everybody was talking, in the papers and outside them, about the perils of " single-chamber

government" and the virtues of the Referendum; Lord Rosebery joined in the chorus. He hunted out what Mirabeau and Oliver Cromwell, both well-known constitutional purists, had said on the dangers of a single chamber, and declared that the Referendum should be the "supreme appeal for great constitutional questions."

A harassed Party leader, fighting for his life as Mr. Balfour then was, may be pardoned much nonsense of this kind. But Lord Rosebery's sole excuse for speaking at all was that he could speak with a thoughtful detachment impossible to the actual protagonists. There is no evidence that he had ever before considered the Referendum as a possible addition to the British polity. What he had said about the House of Lords indicated, so far as it went, a preference for a single chamber as against an unreformed House, and for the rest no responsible statesman on the Liberal side had given the smallest hint that might be construed as tending to an uncontrolled House of Commons. As for "dollar dictation," Lord Rosebery, as a strong Party man in his time, must have been perfectly aware how far forty thousand pounds will go in the corruption of constituencies. In fact he was talking, so far as concerned matter, like any flustered country gentleman in terror for his land or his dividends. The old stately platitudes about trust in the people, the strong common sense of the British nation, the political instincts of an Imperial race, and so forth, were forgotten. The new and far from stately platitudes about revolution, spoliation, and a looting democracy were eagerly adopted by a facile imagination.

There is no profit in tracing here the details of the proposals which Lord Lansdowne brought forward in 1911, following the main lines of Lord Rosebery's resolutions, for the constitution of a new Upper Chamber. The Peers, very naturally, would not have the plan, and the net result of Lord Rosebery's reforming zeal was that the House had put on formal record two extremely compromising admissions: (1) That its

hereditary character unfitted it for its duties ; (2) that it did not propose, of its own volition, to part with its hereditary character. The honest Conservative Peers who had been beguiled into voting for the Rosebery resolutions could scarcely be unaware of the damage to their moral position wrought by this gesture of surrender, and one more resentment was added to their long list of grudges againts Lord Rosebery.

At last the reality of the Parliament Bill broke harshly on the complacency of those Peers who had drugged themselves into a belief that they retained still some initiative. In the excusable exasperation of the moment many foolish things were said ; but the hotheads were, as sometimes happens, less inept than the men long renowned for calm sagacity. There were two things, and two only, to be done. The Government might be forced deliberately to the creation of Peers—a step which it was extremely unwilling to take—and saddled with whatever scandal attached to such a strain on the prerogative. Or use might be made of the Government's embarrassments to extort some modifications in the Bill itself, and some binding undertaking regarding House of Lords reform. The derided Die-Hards took the first view, and were consistent and courageous in acting on it. The approved statesmen delayed negotiation until the point when the Government was assured that their resistance was only a bluff, and that there was no danger in demanding unconditional surrender. Among the first to blench was Lord Rosebery. He protested against the Bill as "ill-judged, revolutionary, and partisan," framed on lines of Party rancour and revenge. There was, he said, a wave of revolution, social and political. Socialist schemes were being financed by heavy taxation, chiefly of the rich ; and while one House of Parliament was in process of effacement the other had been reduced to the level of a salaried board.[1] The Primate had appealed in vain for conciliation ; the Government had simply wrung the dove's neck and served it

[1] A reference to payment of members, which had just been ordained by Mr. Lloyd George's resolution in the House of Commons.

up on the olive branch. So far the whole tone was that of Lord Willoughby de Broke. But all this imposing preamble was followed by the weakest of enacting clauses. Lord Rosebery declared that he felt "rather inclined" to let the Government create Peers and make themselves ridiculous. But the dangers were too great, and he could offer no counsel.

When the Lords, on August 9 and 10, were debating whether they should yield, or stand by their amendments and accept the consequences, Lord Rosebery was equally unhelpful. No Peer exceeded him in the bitterness with which he assailed the Government. He severely condemned Mr. Asquith for obtaining contingent guarantees (for the free creation of Peers) from "a young and inexperienced King"—then something over forty. He claimed that before the King acceded to so enormous a demand he should have been allowed to consult ex-Ministers. But, he concluded, the sole practical question was whether the Bill should pass with or without the scandal of a constitutional strain. The House of Lords they had known was dead, but without the creation of Peers it would still retain power to check the "dangerous measures" of the Government. The scandal of a great creation of Peers, however, might weaken the hold of the centre of Empire on its component parts. If the Bill were allowed to pass the House would be left with some vitality. If the creation of Peers were forced they would have no power at all.

Lord Rosebery's advice, as all men know, was taken, and by a majority of 17 the Lords decided to bow to the inevitable without the "social shock" of a large adulteration of the Peerage.

When the Bill passed, a protest, to be inscribed in the journals of the House, was initiated by Lord Rosebery and signed by fourteen other Peers. It gave fourteen reasons—(one for each Peer, exclusive of the leader), among them being that the Bill "destroys the balance of the constitution and also the constitution itself," that "it establishes single-chamber govern-

ment," "that it obscures this change by preserving the House of Lords in a nominal existence," that it was avowedly brought forward as a step to carrying a constitutional change without consulting the electors, and that "the method of carrying it is almost as great a strain on the constitution as the measure itself."

This curious anathema was the final act of a political career which had begun nearly forty years earlier. After 1911 Lord Rosebery never set foot in the House of Lords. It might almost be said that his political life opened with a campaign against the order to which he belonged. It closed with a fierce denunciation of the one successful assault on the powers and privileges of that order. Lord Rosebery's road between these two points was scattered with discarded ideals, and he arrived at the end of the journey with but one surviving enthusiasm, his passion for the Empire. On that subject he might still be tempted occasionally to write and speak, and on that subject he always wrote and spoke, not merely well—for he never talked poor English, even when he talked poor sense—but with genuine force and inspiration. But the welter of confused events which complicated British politics after the passing of the Parliament Act apparently left him cold, and only the coming of the Great War moved him for a moment to forsake his study. A serious decline in his health would alone have counselled inactivity. But in any case such retirement would have been judicious, and it is to be regretted, in the interests of his fame, that it was not ante-dated by some years. The "Elder Statesman," maintaining the habit of responsibility without the exercise of power, is apparently a figure congruous with the political genius of Japan, where indeed long tradition has associated the idea of retirement with that of mellow wisdom. The Western mind, on the other hand, seems to need concrete employment to preserve not alone its vigour but its balance. Politicians are constantly complaining that they have no time to think, so oppressed are they by the mere routine of their

employment ; but the occasional spectacle of even a considerable politician thinking at leisure suggests that the disability is not only a safeguard of their own reputations, but a not inconsiderable security to the public.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PATRIOT OF THE GREAT WAR

Patriotic Speeches—Illness and Bereavement—The Death of Neil Primrose—Dispute with Ministry of Munitions—The Last Flash of Wit—Transfers Mentmore Estates to his Heir—The Enigma of his Character—The Destruction of Gladstonian Liberalism.

LORD ROSEBERY, as we have seen, had little love for France, and a strong attachment to the Victorian conception of an understanding with Prussia as the only safe basis of British foreign policy. He disliked the whole policy of the Entente, and in private and public had not concealed his conviction that Great Britain, in embracing it, was "backing the wrong horse." When the die was cast, however, he remembered only that he was a good Briton and Imperialist and, though he had but just recovered from a severe illness, gave all the help of which he was capable to the recruiting movement.

On September 5, 1914, addressing a meeting as Lord Lieutenant of Linlithgowshire, he made an eloquent appeal to the manhood of Scotland. Those who went out, he said, would go out for a righteous cause ; they would be fighting for the sanctity of the public law of Europe, which, if the enemy conquered, was torn up and destroyed for ever. "If we were to be beaten, if we were to sink to be a third-rate Power," he said, "I for one would from my heart and soul rather that all our people were to pass into exile or into death and leave this island vacant for some superior race."

At Edinburgh, on September 18th, after the Battle of the Marne, he rejoiced in the signs of the unity of the Empire :

> Our enemy fondly hugged himself that the Empire was a loosely compacted structure which would fall to pieces at the first touch of the antagonist. Lies, lies, lies! A nation which has been fed on lies for the last thirty years cannot hope to thrive in any enterprise.

The war, he concluded, must be regarded as the "fine on the renewal of the lease of the British Empire."

At Juniper Green, Midlothian, on September 22nd, he distinguished broadly, according to the fashion of the moment—a fashion which the facts never justified—between Prussia and the rest of Germany. The policy of aggression and domination, inconsistent with civilisation itself, was, he said, "entirely Prussian." In pursuance of this idea, he wrote some months later an essay on Frederick the Great, for the tone of which, it is safe to say, current events were responsible. For Frederick was really a man rather after Lord Rosebery's own heart, if we may judge from his enthusiasm for other specimens of the authoritarian. But under the influence of the prevailing sentiment against Germany we find this miracle of efficiency denounced as a curse to his age and to his kind; a practiser of systematic perfidy, rapacity, and hypocrisy, which he bequeathed as a sinister inheritance to his people; and the contriver of a state system which was "interfering and oppressive" and touched in every particular by the "fatal taint of despotism." Such a thing, written at such a time, cannot be taken too seriously. But it would be easy to find many utterances of Lord Rosebery in which the "fatal taint of despotism" is advantageously compared with "interminable discussions in Parliament."

Lord Rosebery's war activities were interrupted by a recurrence of illness which drove him into a strict retirement from which he never again emerged. He was now in every sense an old man, and war and marriage had deprived him of what, in earlier days, had been a sufficient compensation for public griefs and disappointments, namely, the constant society of his children. The private life of a public man should be sacred from intrusion while he lives. But Lord Rosebery's tender interest in his sons and daughters is already well known,

and was indeed more than once indicated by himself in public. Lady Margaret (Peggy) Primrose, who married the Earl of Crewe in 1899, and Lady Sybil, who married Colonel C. J. C. Grant in 1903, are the subject of a note in Lord Morley's *Recollections*, (March 1894) : " I found R. already at table with his two girls. The girls went, and we talked over the events of the day and of recent other days." Lady Sybil, at six years of age, was quoted by her father from a Scottish platform. She had suffered from slight insomnia and her nurse had told her that, to sleep better, she must not think too much. " But I can't help thinking," was the reply ; " I can't make my mind sit down." " I hope," Lord Rosebery added, " that we shall take to heart that saying, and in the great cause of progress not let our minds sit down."

The boys from an early age were wont to accompany their father on Continental holidays, and were present with him at the coronation of Queen Wilhelmina of Holland. Between Lord Rosebery and his second son, Neil, the relations, says Lord Birkenhead, were " among the most touching in a life full of idealised love." Neil Primrose inherited his father's taste for politics and passion for sport—it is, by the way, of interest to note that Lord Rosebery, fond of the turf as he was, was rather anxious that his sons should not acquire the same liking—but his Liberalism was perhaps a deeper thing than his father's. Neil was Radical, Free Trader, Pacificist on principle, and only in a very limited degree an Imperialist. He took a different line from Lord Rosebery on the People's Budget and consequently, says Lord Birkenhead, " the angle from which father and son respectively contemplated the years of crisis that intervened grew more and more divergent. But this fact made not the slightest difference to the singular love and affection by which the two men were united. . . . They were indeed more like brothers in their easy and affectionate intimacy than like father and son."[1]

Neil Primrose, who had joined the Army at the

[1] *Points of View* (Viscount Birkenhead).

beginning of the war, was summoned home to be Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs in the spring of 1915; but the formation of the first Coalition Government left him free for military duty until 1916, when Mr. Lloyd George urged him to take the post of Patronage Secretary in the second Coalition. He consented only on condition that he should return at the first possible moment to active duty, and in May 1917 he left his post (by this time that of Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury) to join the Palestine expedition. He was killed in action in November 1918, and buried in Palestine as belonging to the Jewish faith. "Only one who knew him well," said Mr. Asquith, "can realise how much golden promise lies buried in the grave of Neil Primrose." With that promise was buried a fond father's dearest hopes. On Lord Rosebery the blow, though it was accepted with a noble stoicism, fell with crushing force, and the shadow of this loss darkened the remainder of his life.

Two last glimpses will suffice. Lord Rosebery in his early days had often talked something hardly distinguishable from Socialism, if we dissociate the word from the suggestion of violence and use it for a system by which the State undertakes responsibilities which other systems leave to the individual. He had frequently urged that the State should do things which the older political philosophies had declared outside the true province of Governments. Still more frequently had he glorified the strong hand. The "efficiency" of the Chesterfield speech, if it meant anything, meant something very like the "business government" of the second Coalition. It is interesting to note, in Lord Rosebery's last appearance as a controversialist, what were his own reactions to Efficiency reduced to the concrete and affecting a minor concern of his own. During the war the Ministry of Munitions had commandeered one of his Scottish farms, and had erected buildings on it, in order to fit it for its contemplated use as an air station. The plan, like many others of

the time, did not mature; and in November 1919, the land was advertised for sale, "with or without the aerodrome." This announcement filled Lord Rosebery with wrath, and moved him to take up once more his formidable controversial pen. "I cannot help being surprised at this," he wrote, "because I am under the impression that the farm belongs to me and not to the Ministry." During the war, he added, the Government had so abridged the rights of individuals that its numberless departments had come to the conclusion that such rights no longer existed. He awaited an explanation of this "strange and lawless procedure," and meanwhile requested the department to remove the buildings, which were an embarrassment, and not an ornament, as soon as possible.

The department supplied the desired explanation. It appears that the Government was "in a position equivalent to having an option on the land, which it might be desirable or not to exercise, and the only means of ascertaining for certain whether it would be prudent to purchase was to advertise the property for disposal." Lord Rosebery demurred. "Would it console me," he asked, "if I found that my watch had been sold or pawned, to be answered by the pickpocket that this was only done to ascertain its value?"

With each exchange of letters the temper of Lord Rosebery grew more inflamed. "I do not believe," he wrote, "that the Legislature contemplated that a measure adopted in the stress of a terrible war, and justifiable on that ground, should be utilised in time of profound peace as a means of oppression of individuals." "It seems," he replies to a further explanation, "a strange proceeding for a department of a lawful Government to recoup the taxpayer by selling something which does not belong to it." "I cannot share," he told his correspondent, "your indifference to the distinction between *meum* and *tuum* and even the eighth commandment. . . . We are as far apart as the poles, or as honesty from dishonesty."

The preliminary encounters were with subordinates.

The honour afterwards fell to Sir Howard Frank, in private head of a firm of auctioneers, but now acting as a Government official, to cross swords with the enraged Earl. Sir Howard attempted to justify the terms of the advertisement, as well as the rest of the procedure, and Lord Rosebery rejoined :

You make a great point of my having wrongly said that the farm was to be sold by auction. You are doubtless more familiar with such advertisements than I am. To me, I confess, it is a matter of indifference, if I am to be robbed, whether it is by a pickpocket or a burglar. . . . You say you have spent £68,000 on these worthless hovels. To sell my best farm to recoup your department's wasteful expenditure is an unscrupulous depredation unworthy of any honest Minister. I have been a Minister myself, and should have blushed to countenance such malpractices. You seem to glory in them. Times are changed.

Sir Howard Frank retorted with some spirit, on which Lord Rosebery replied :

You resent being compared to a burglar or a pickpocket, but when anyone attempts to rob me of my land I regard him as a thief. What is the case ? You built a few huts at an insane cost on the edge of a fine farm, and now you claim to confiscate the farm to conceal the shameless waste of public money. You claim to protect the taxpayer. It is from you, however, that he needs protection, you who have spent £68,000 on those squalid huts. No wonder you want to hide your extravagance. What I complain of is that you wish to hide it at my expense.

Mr. F. G. Kellaway, the official representative of the Ministry, in a speech at Crewe made some comment on the Earl's attitude. Lord Rosebery thereupon wrote to *The Times* that " the department had let loose 'one of their understrappers' " to deliver an invective against him :

He says that he knows my record. I cannot reciprocate. He comes from the Ministry of Munitions, but I do not know whether he is a Minister or a munition. . . . His invective lacks point, but that will improve with age and experience, and Mr. Kellaway may yet live to annoy somebody. I rejoice that he calls my letter waspish, because a wasp implies a sting, and I certainly meant it to plant a sting to fill the void which ought to have been occupied by a conscience. Before the department sent out this dove from the ark they ought to have taken more pains

about the paper fastened under its wings. Mr. Kellaway seems to think that I wanted the huts at Turnhouse. He is wrong; no sane man would accept them as a gift. . . . Robbery can be accomplished under laws, as is now taking place in Russia, where we have been endeavouring to combat principles while we are reducing them to practice at home.

But there is one law which overrides this thievish statute, and to that even the Kellaways and Franks must bow: that is, the law promulgated on Mount Sinai—the Ten Commandments—which overrule all other legislation. It is on the eighth of those commandments that I take my stand. . . . Mr. Kellaway mouths a good deal about patriotism. I am not afraid of my record of patriotism during the war, though no doubt it does not equal Mr. Kellaway's. I could not go into the trenches, nor, I think, did Mr. Kellaway. But I found other means of assisting the country in my humble way.

It was said of a small eighteenth-century wit that his only chance of immortality was that Pope should give him a line in a new edition of the *Dunciad*. Possibly, when the other activities of one of the minor supermen of the great Coalition are forgotten, he will be recalled as the man who evoked the last flash of Lord Rosebery's contemptuous wit.

The second glimpse is more sobering. On August 22, 1922, Lord Rosebery's tenants on the Mentmore estate were apprised of the fact that the house and lands had been made over to his heir, Lord Dalmeny. Lord Rosebery was now over seventy-five, and intended to spend in the strictest seclusion the remainder of his life. "Good-bye," were his last words. "Good-bye; I shall never see you again."

So fell the veil over the last phase of a career which still possesses an interest out of all proportion to the importance of its positive and concrete achievement. If we are to appraise only the official record of Lord Rosebery, it must be admitted that, apart from what he suffered rather than what he did as Prime Minister, he has little greater claim to be remembered than any Childers or Shaw-Lefevre. His uneasy Premiership, though it might serve to distinguish him from the once important-seeming people who are now deader than many Pharaohs, made no addition to his reputation.

Even his speeches, good as they were, would not in themselves have sufficed to create a permanent legend. A few of his phrases have passed into the common currency, and will be repeated, no doubt, for generations by the duller kind of politician, who of all Englishmen displays the fault Falstaff attributed to the English—that they never had a good thing but they did make it too common. But neither as a statesman nor as an orator did Lord Rosebery reach anything like the first rank; and it may be questioned whether he is even entitled to a place in the second. Why, then, may we still confidently suggest that, by those who write the history of the late nineteenth century, the character of this fascinating but wayward and on the whole ineffective statesman will always be discussed with the interest usually accorded only to the great?

The first obvious answer is that the character itself is of great intrinsic interest. Hamlet, the unpractical and irresolute, fascinates people who care not a pin if the businesslike and successful Fortinbras be omitted altogether from the play; and if the English have an amiable weakness as a people it is that they are much more enthusiastic over their picturesque failures than their solid successes. There is, in another sense than that of Touchstone, much virtue in "if." Lord Rosebery in fact accomplished little. But from sixteen to over sixty he never ceased to suggest splendid possibilities, and it is such men who supply the conundrums which historians (being human like the rest of us) love. Lord Rosebery will puzzle posterity as he puzzled his contemporaries, none of whom seems to have taken his measure. Was he a Chatham *manqué*, a man of splendid but intractable genius whom the malice of circumstances denied the opportunity and stimulus necessary to reveal his full powers? Or was he only a Charles Townshend, type of the surface brilliance which overlies no depths of intellect or character? Did he represent the tragedy of a fine mind and generous nature thwarted by some constitutional levity of temper? Or was he just a beautiful

voice, and after that little? What were his real convictions, and what his hearsay opinions, or his histrionic pretences? And if there were histrionic pretences, did they wholly or in part deceive himself? Most of the politicians of his time may be summed up, not indeed justly (for the character of the nearest crossing-sweeper is a mystery too profound for final judgment by anything short of the Infinite understanding), but with some approximation to justice. It needs no seer to reveal to us what sort of men were Harcourt, Goschen, Morley, Fowler, Hicks-Beach, and Spencer. Even Gladstone and Chamberlain present few real problems. Lord Morley shows that he knew both quite well, for he always speaks of both in language which means something. That he never succeeded in knowing Lord Rosebery is shown by his choice of a phraseology which often might mean anything and sometimes means little or nothing. Lord Rosebery, in short, defies the label. He is hot ice and wondrous strange snow. By omitting certain sets of facts, and placing others in a strong light, he can be proved almost anything we like—a man before his age, a man behind it; a strong, far-seeing statesman, a sentimentalist bemused by his own incantations and catch-words; a patriot too pure for the vulgar commerce of politics, a politician too slippery to be trusted by men themselves not over-particular. This difficulty has been so strongly felt that most commentators have imitated that judge who never heard more than one side of a case, because to hear both confused his mind. His admirers will have him all godhead. His detractors make him all clay feet.

In reality it is very hard indeed—the more so because Lord Rosebery, though a very social man, was a most secretive one, and admitted nobody to his full confidence—to discover any formula which will explain all the facts of his career. It is easy to say that he was a spoiled child who would not play the game unless he were permitted to alter the rules to suit his own convenience. But he must be admitted a child very

much out of the common, and it must be confessed that the spoiling had results not altogether usual. It is easy to say, as one of his colleagues did, that he was "too selfish, too trivial, too much of a *poseur*."[1] But selfishness was not shown (to take one instance) in the County Council episode; his Imperialistic passion, whatever else it might be, was certainly not trivial; and if his career was a pose it is not a little singular that a man of his admitted parts should sometimes pose so disadvantageously for himself. Some part, no doubt, of his failure was due to over-niceness. But if that is alleged as the cause of the whole trouble there are awkward questions to be met, for while he sometimes cavilled, in matters of political honour, on the ninth part of a hair, there were occasions when he seemed rather more of a latitudinarian and opportunist than many politicians esteemed far more cynical. Regarding Home Rule, for example, he could only escape a charge of levity by pleading guilty to something more serious. Whether we accept or reject his frequent professions that office had no charm, that he did not "belong to the profession of politics," and that he obeyed the call of public duty with reluctance, there are mountainous facts to be overcome. For while he did in fact put away, time after time, the offer of place, it is also certain that he sought place on occasion with not less than the average eagerness; that to make his demand effective he took measures which were resented as rather exceeding the permitted limits; and that it was only at an advanced age, and in the decline of his vigour, that he could bring himself definitely to quit the political arena.

In short, the man was a puzzle, and puzzles are always interesting. There is no single clue to the mystery of Lord Rosebery, with his spasmodic brilliances, his strange lethargies, his sudden strengths, his unexpected weaknesses. He was a man who might lend colour to the notion that a human being is not a single entity, but a bundle of separate and often antagonistic

[1] *Life of Sir William Harcourt* (A. G. Gardiner).

personalities, wrapped up in one skin like a mass of writhing snakes in a bag. We seem, in reviewing his actions, to be dealing rather with several minds than with one person in his various moods. Polite men can often be very nasty ; but it is not easy to reconcile the kind of truculence Lord Rosebery sometimes showed with the kind of caressing charm so many people found in him. It is not the same man in another temper, but a different man altogether. Clear-headed men often say foolish and contradictory things, but their failures, like their successes, belong to their mental habit ; Lord Rosebery, on the other hand, was mentally sometimes himself and sometimes quite another person. There is something not ordinary in the contrast between the swift glance of genius he casts at this matter and his bewildered gaze and commonplace comment on that—something that cannot be explained by mere fatigue or inattention, for a clever man remains a clever man, even when he is seasick, and the true eye cannot help seeing things truly, though its owner may be suffering from the toothache. It is not easy, moreover, to understand how one individual could possess tastes at once so numerous, so diverse, and so decided. Walpole liked business and fox-hunting ; Chesterfield, business and society ; Carteret, business and brandy ; Chatham, business and gardening ; Gladstone, business, tree-cutting, and theology ; Salisbury, business and science ; Disraeli, business and novel-writing. But we cannot imagine Walpole revelling in books, Gladstone following the hounds, Salisbury dancing for hours and writing poems for young ladies, or Disraeli "tiring out three horses before breakfast." Lord Rosebery was something of a Walpole, a Chesterfield, a Chatham, a Gladstone, and a Disraeli, as well as many things special to himself ; he united in his own person the different tastes of a dozen wholly different human types, and each of these tastes was something quite distinct from the mere languid acquiescence of a great man in the life round him. Mr. Birrell once found him at the Durdans in riding-breeches going round to the

stables. "If you don't mind," said Lord Rosebery, "I would just as soon Mr. Gladstone did not know what I am up to."[1] Mr. Birrell himself might well have been an embarrassment had he intruded on one of Lord Rosebery's select sporting dinners; and some of Lord Rosebery's sporting friends would have been sadly out of place when he was holding one of his literary levées. For he seemed to don and doff his various personalities as if they were mere suits of clothes, and the epigrammatist who charmed Morley with his "pleasant *mots*" became (dress and manners apart) the stone-age man among the pheasant-shooters. All men have their incongruities, but it is not often that so many are compressed in a single individual. One may read a glowing sentence of John Morley, concerning the democratic fervours of his youth, without stopping to think that a few pages before the austere philosopher was discovering the finest connoisseurship for the best society. That is all very natural and comprehensible. But there are times when, in enjoying Lord Rosebery's capital prose, one does find one's self asking with actual wonder: "Did the man who wrote this actually kill 651 rabbits in three hours—or was it four?" "Was this admirable thing penned, perhaps, two days after the victory of Ladas, and did the author really love the atmosphere of Tattersall's ring?" "Surely it was not this man, but another, who gave his colleagues anxiety about a Garter or a Thistle?"

The case is not that of an intellectual man's pastimes. There was nothing in the law of his nature to prevent Shakespeare from being a sportsman; he is in fact supposed to have begun life as a poacher, attracted perhaps by the double excitement of hunting and being hunted. But though Shakespeare, in his more prosperous years, perhaps preserved game, and certainly drank hard, we feel that such things are incidental to the man. The main facts about him are the brain and soul that produced *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*. In most men who have a passion for the finer things there is

[1] *Life of Sir Edward Cook* (Saxon Mills).

also some considerable relish for the coarser ; it may almost be said that it is only the man of fine tastes, being also the man of intense feeling and perception, who can fully enjoy the coarsest pleasures of sense. In any case a due mixture of tastes makes for health and sanity. But in most people it can be said definitely which side of them most truly represents the man. In Lord Rosebery's case there was no such certitude. He had a strong fancy, if not a passion, for politics. He had a decided passion for rhetoric. He heartily loved books. He even loved, or, if he did not love, he could tolerate for the pride and satisfaction of achievement, the dire labour of writing books, and in his case it was a real labour, for his books were not thrown together, but always written with the pains dictated by an imperious literary conscience. At various times of his life one might be tempted to declare him one of those whose main adventures are in the world of thought. But on the whole it would seem that the politician, the bibliophile, the writer, and even the didactic rhetorician, were secondary to the great noble. There was a startling number of Roseberys, some of them, no doubt, what the real Rosebery might have been had he only enjoyed the luck to be born a younger son. As things happened, the true Rosebery seems to have been the fifth Earl, the friend of kings, the husband of a Rothschild, the lord of many domains, the wearer of many chains and ribbons. And this true Rosebery's ultimate tastes and ideas were the tastes and ideas appropriate to a great aristocrat. It might amuse him to possess a philosophy as well as a family tree, to have the praise of reviewers as well as the congratulations of the royal enclosure, to run for a time the King's domains as well as his own estates. But none of these things were his serious business. His real affair was to be a nobleman, and do as a nobleman should. The incidental Roseberys crowd the landscape of his career like the false Richmonds at Bosworth, but at the end none of them is left alive. What does remain is what was there from the beginning. It was mainly the brilliant young aristocrat who fascinated

the good Cory at Eton. It is the old aristocrat, and the old aristocrat alone, who emerges in that last acrid correspondence with the Ministry of Munitions.

But apart from the interest which must cling to a character so enigmatic, there is a further reason for believing that Lord Rosebery will be assigned an importance in history quite disproportionate to his direct achievement. His name must be inseparably associated with a much larger thing than the delimitation of an Asiatic frontier or the annexation of an African wilderness. The last of the aristocratic Liberal statesmen, he will doubtless figure as the decisive factor in the destruction of the Liberal Party as he found it. Probably the Manchester School philosophy was doomed in any event. It could hardly have existed at all but for the singular accident which gave England, just at the time when the middle class came into its full share of political power, a virtually unchallenged position in the world. The idealism and the practical philosophy of Englishmen in the nineteenth century both rested on one foundation, the sleeping partnership with a Prussia strong enough to hold all the other Powers in check, but not so strong as to develop ambitions dangerous to the British people. Free from any serious danger from outside, Englishmen could afford to exalt above all other ideas that of the liberty of the individual. The rapid advance of industry, in the absence of effective competition from a Europe still shaken by revolutionary tremors or from an America still undeveloped, mitigated the evils natural to unchecked Capitalism, and it could be maintained, with some show of reason, that the unrestricted play of economic forces, though necessarily accompanied by a certain harshness to individuals, had a great balance of advantage on its side. With no apparent reason to fear either foreign ambition or domestic upheaval, there appeared to be no reason why every man should not say, and to a large extent do, what seemed right in his own eyes. Thus, while the nineteenth-century Briton was generally of an unmilitary temper, he was exceedingly free in such criticisms of other nations as would,

in different circumstances, have tended to provoke war ; and, while he was by no means gentle towards agitation where it appeared really dangerous, as in Ireland and India, he could vaunt, so far as Great Britain was concerned, that he tolerated all opinions. All the Liberal ideas—individualism, anti-militarism, unrestricted liberty of speech, freedom of trade—depended ultimately on the balance of Europe which existed for more than half a century after Waterloo ; and with the natural tendency of men to believe that what is must always be, the Liberal philosophers put forward things which were only locally and temporarily true as having universal and eternal application.

With the rise of the German Empire to the position of a great world-Power, with the increasing challenge to British trade supremacy from many quarters, and with the emergence of a crowd of social problems arising from the completion of the industrial revolution, it was not possible that nineteenth-century Liberalism should escape some modification. Conceivably it might, however, have retained much of its individuality but for the chance which placed Lord Rosebery in the leadership, and there is irony in the circumstance that Mr. John Morley, the disciple of Mill, should have been the decisive influence in elevating the man who was to compass the overthrow of all that Mill represented.

For though Lord Rosebery's efforts to transform the Liberal Party met with immediate defeat, it was he, and not those who ostensibly triumphed, who was to determine the character of the new Liberalism. It was little to the purpose that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman shut out his brilliant antagonist. He could not exclude either of the policies for which Lord Rosebery stood. Roseberian Imperialism entered in the persons of Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Asquith, and Mr. Haldane. Roseberian pseudo-Socialism, in somewhat cruder form, entered in the person of Mr. Lloyd George. Lord Rosebery, indeed, lived to resent the actual application of both his ideas. He disliked the

policy of the Entente. He detested the policy of the People's Budget. But the essence of both policies, the abandonment of detachment in the region of foreign affairs, the abandonment of *laissez-faire* at home, derived from him ; and between them they killed the Gladstonian idea.

There were still Liberals who frenetically opposed Imperialism in all its aspects—Liberals who carried Pacificism to an extreme Gladstone would have repudiated, who went far beyond Bright in their indifference to the Empire, and who wished to reduce armaments to a point Harcourt would have deemed unreasonable. But it was just these very Liberals who would have most scandalised Gladstone, Bright, and Harcourt by their eagerness to lavish public money on schemes which, whatever might be said for them, were wholly incongruous with the philosophy of Liberalism. It was just these very Liberals who regarded with complacency such interference with liberty of contract as the minimum wage, compulsory national insurance, and State intervention in industrial disputes. It was just these very Liberals, crying out against the French alliance, denouncing the understanding with Russia, protesting against the bargain over Morocco, sympathising with Nationalism in Egypt and India, who also shouted for Mr. Lloyd George's land scheme. There were indeed Liberals who maintained some sort of loyalty to Gladstonian ideas of finance. But they were the very men who, like Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Asquith, and Mr. Haldane, had embraced Lord Rosebery's view of Empire, and adopted (with a difference in the application) Lord Rosebery's principles of foreign policy. Only a few purists, like Lord Courtney, remained to profess the full faith of the old Liberalism—its friendly detachment in foreign outlook, its belief in the unrestricted play of economic forces at home.

Lord Rosebery, a Hamlet of politics, died like Hamlet in the play, with political corpses of his making all round him.

CHAPTER XIX

THE MAN OF LETTERS

Lord Rosebery's Merit as a Writer—and his Occasional Weakness—His Power of Vivid Summary and Characterisation—*Pitt, Chatham, Randolph Churchill, The Last Phase*—A Literary Nobleman.

FOR SOME time before his wife's death Lord Rosebery had been occupied with a study of the younger Pitt. The subject had interested him from his school-days ; he had read widely and deeply concerning the man and the period ; and it was natural that his friend John Morley should urge him not to let all this qualification run to waste. The task, which in its beginning supplied one common interest the more between husband and wife, served, in its later stages, to distract a widower's grief. " My chief happiness in completing it," wrote Lord Rosebery in his preface, " would have been to give it to my wife ; it can now only be inscribed to her memory."

Lord Morley's note [1] on this work and its author is interesting :

> His knowledge of English political history for the last hundred years is extremely full and accurate and he has it all ready. A curious example of this arose on something which I pointed out to him in Trevelyan's *Fox*, and as to which I wrote to G. O. T. It was about Shelburne—whether S. lived within his income. G. O. T. says Yes. But R. instantly produced a passage from Bentham that S. was heavily in debt. Talked about his *Pitt*, the part as to Lord Fitzwilliam's recall which I thought extremely good (Mr. Gladstone thought it extremely bad) and that as to Pitt's resignation in 1801, which I found inadequate and open to debate, as it is likely to remain for many a day to come. He had allowed himself to get into a rather petulant humour with Lecky on the point, for this is an occasional weakness of his.

[1] *Recollections* (Viscount Morley).

Pitt was Lord Rosebery's first important work. Apart from official compositions, his pen had so far been employed only on the sort of essay that may be used as a speech of occasion. Many of these productions were carefully wrought ; all suggested considerable possibilities ; but it had not yet been shown that the hand so deft in filling a tiny panel could adapt itself to a big canvas. It must be said that *Pitt* and its successors did not altogether resolve this question. In literature, as in politics, Lord Rosebery remained the man of promise ; and, though sure of a highly honourable position in any new work on " Royal and Noble Authors," scarcely established an indisputable claim to be included among the considerable literary forces of his time. The great merit of his works and their chief defect are both eminently aristocratic. Lord Rosebery charms with his mondaine ease. It used to be the test of a man of breeding that he carried his liquor like a gentleman. Lord Rosebery carries his learning like a nobleman, lightly and gracefully, without effort or ostentation ; and he has what Halifax called a " Crown wit," the wit suited to great men and princes, who may use a pleasantry to season good sense, but cannot compromise their dignity by joking often for the joke's sake. He never chuckles, sniggers, or guffaws ; but in the printed page, as on the platform, confines himself to delicate banter and the dryly humorous phrase. For the rest we find the same sort of instinctive tact that distinguishes the born hostess ; we seem in a world in which amenity is the highest good, in which everybody knows, but nobody mentions, disadvantageous things about everybody else, in which condemnation is conveyed only by compliment, and compliment itself is often the vehicle of irony. Such qualities are specially valuable in dealing with contemporary things ; and it seems a great pity that Lord Rosebery, instead of showing so large a devotion to the eighteenth century, did not rather apply himself to a study of his own times in the form of an *Apologia pro Vitâ Suâ*. No literary artist of his age was so admirably qualified, as

his slight but pregnant sketch of Lord Randolph Churchill shows, to play, if not the Samsonic Sargent, at least the delicate Orpen, to the men of the late nineteenth century.

His main weakness is a certain lofty disregard for minor values. He is very uneven. Like some rich men who are often carelessly lavish, and as often thoughtlessly mean, he gives us just what he happens to have about him at the time. Sometimes his reader gets a shower of sovereigns, sometimes a pocket-full of sixpences, sometimes only a collection of rather battered halfpence. It is true that all his books show thought and severe labour in research; so far he is the conscientious craftsman, with a high impatience of slackness. But in actual style he is often content to fall below his form, which at its best is so good that the descent is grievously noticeable. If the golden phrase arrives without effort, he uses it not only with aptness but enjoyingly; if it does not come, he is content with well-worn copper or nickel. He even remarks that "comment is superfluous." He once spoke of the inequality of every writer who has to earn his living. "It is the genius that writes for pleasure, like the divine Miss Austen, or Gray the poet, who maintains a serene level approaching perfection. Even the gigantic Sir Walter, labouring with a hundred pen-power to rear a castle or remove mountains of debt by faith, faith in his good right arm, has to produce volumes, as it were, from hand to mouth, not always with success." That is true, but it is not less true that the great man who writes for pleasure is not immune from the tendency to drop below his best. Lord Rosebery was himself a conspicuous example. Take, as an instance, the passage in which he compares the two Pitts:

> Pitt (the younger) was endowed with mental powers of the first order; his readiness, his apprehension, his resources were extraordinary; the daily parliamentary demand on his brain and nerve power he met with serene and inexhaustible affluence; his industry, administrative activity, and public spirit were unrivalled; it was perhaps impossible to carry the force of sheer ability further; he was a portent. Chatham in most

of these respects was inferior to his son. He was a political mystic; sometimes sublime, sometimes impossible, and sometimes insane. But he had genius. It was that fitful and undefinable inspiration that gave to his eloquence a piercing and terrible note which no other English eloquence has touched; that made him the ideal of his countrymen, though they could scarcely be said to have seen his face or heard his voice or read his speeches; that made him a watchword among those distant insurgents whose wish for independence he yet ardently opposed; that made each remotest soldier and bluejacket feel when he was in office that there was a man in Downing Street, and a man whose eye penetrated everywhere; that made his name at once an inspiration and a dread; that cowed the tumultuous Commons at his frown.

This is just competent, uninspired, rather spineless prose that any journeyman could have written. There is nothing to make the reader see either man, and the "remotest sailor and bluejacket" have the weary air of having stood to attention in too many perorations. Compare such spiritless portraiture with the impression of Randolph Churchill in the heyday of his popularity:

His demeanour, his unexpectedness, his fits of caressing humility, his impulsiveness, his tinge of violent eccentricity, his apparent dare-devilry, made him a fascinating companion; while his wit, his sarcasm, his piercing personalities, his elaborate irony, and his effective delivery, gave astonishing popularity to his speeches. Nor were his physical attributes without their attraction. His slim and boyish figure, his moustache which had an emotion of its own, his round protruding eyes gave a compound interest to his speeches and conversation. His laugh, which has been described as "jay-like," was indeed not melodious, but in its very weirdness and discordance it was merriment itself. . . .

He had the vital mainspring of zest. To whatever he applied himself, . . . politics or pleasure, it possessed him entirely; he did it with gusto, with every nerve and every fibre. . . . In congenial society (his conversation) was wholly delightful. He would display his mastery of irony and banter; for with those playthings he was at his best. Nor would he hesitate to air his most intimate views of persons and characters; he did not shrink from admissions which were candid to the verge of cynicism; he revelled in paradox. . . .When in this vein he produced table talk which would have strained a Boswell to bursting; it was all gaiety, the delightful whim of the moment. He was, moreover, absolutely unaffected himself, and ruthlessly pricked the bubbles of affectation or cant in others. In graver discussion he had, when he chose, a subtle and engaging deference; his ideas were luminous and original.

There we have real portraiture; the vital things,

physical and spiritual, seized with certainty and stabbed, so to speak, to the paper, like butterflies on pins. We understand at once in reading it what raised Randolph Churchill to a height whence he could see all the kingdoms of the earth, what failed him in that elevation, and against what sort of stone he dashed his foot.

Such vivid touches abound in Lord Rosebery's works, big and little, and they are the great merit of his writing. We feel ourselves actually at Trafalgar, when Nelson fell, amid "the rush and hubbub of the half-naked sailors and powder-monkeys . . . all of them black and glowing with the sweat and passion of conflict." We feel ourselves part of the mourning crowd at Burns's funeral, perhaps the saddest in the grim annals of literary tragedy. "We hear those dropping volleys and that muffled drum; we bow our heads as the coffin passes, and acknowledge with tears the inevitable doom. Pass, heavy hearse, with thy weary freight of shattered hopes and exhausted frame; pass, with thy simple pomp of fatherless bairns and sad, moralising friends; pass, with the sting of death to the victory of the grave; pass, with the perishable, and leave us the eternal."

We see Burke at home, taking a lady visitor into his grounds, making his dog "jump into the pond after a stick to show her how well it swam," and afterwards compounding rhubarb pills for his poorer neighbours. Cromwell—whom, singularly enough, Lord Rosebery considered "the first ruler who really understood toleration," on the ground that, though he exported Englishmen as slaves to the West Indies, he welcomed and favoured the Jews—"comes tramping down to us through the ages in his great wide boots, a countenance swollen and reddish, a voice harsh, sharp, and untunable, with a country-made suit, a hat with no band, doubtful linen with a speck of blood on it." The little comedy between Johnson and Wilkes is admirably summarised from Boswell's narrative:

We admire the consummate diplomacy of Boswell, in face of the difficulty of securing Johnson to meet a man he abhorred, luring his

elephant to capture with extraordinary skill; then, when they met, Wilkes's material attentions to Johnson. "Pray give me leave, sir, a little of the brown, some fat, sir, a little of the stuffing, some gravy, let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter—allow me to recommend the squeezing of this orange,"—and so forth; so that Johnson, who looks at him at first with surly virtue, is reconciled through his palate to his bugbear, and they talk together the whole evening with brilliancy and even with cordiality. As we read we realise the whole affair, the crafty crimp Boswell, the wheedling demagogue, and the reluctant moralist.

Equally delicate is the description of how Catt met Frederick the Great:

It was on a canal boat in Holland, Catt, a Swiss teacher twenty-seven years old, sees a gentleman in a black wig and cinnamon-coloured coat who describes himself as first musician to the King of Poland, and who, after staring at him for some time, asks him abruptly who he is. Catt, nettled at his summary manners, refuses to reply. But presently the musician becomes more polite, and draws Catt into amiable converse. They discuss government, religion, literature, and such high topics. Finally Frederick, for he is the strange gentleman, parts with the young man as from a friend, and soon sends for him, keeps him for some score of years under the title of "reader," which should rather be "listener" and which veils the duties of a Literary Crony, Catt's real employment. To listen reverentially to Frederick declaiming tragedies or funeral orations, or any pieces he happens to know by heart, or, worst of all, his own intolerable verses, to profess enjoyment of these recitations, and to place adroitly sympathy or compliment—these are Catt's functions. Great men, and even men not great, often have need of such retainers. . . . It is something to possess a blind and devoted admirer in whose presence one can, so to speak, unbutton oneself and discourse about one's emotions, recite one's works, and explain their subtle meaning and sublime intention —a friendly conduit of egotism.

This power of vivid summary lights up Lord Rosebery's studies of Napoleon—the admirable little introduction to Vandal's *L'avènement de Bonaparte* and the more ambitious *Napoleon: The Last Phase*. Here is the General before the 18 Brumaire, when the "meagre conqueror," the "craving soldier," was about to be replaced by something larger:

The Man of Promise arrives obscurely in Paris. He appears before the Directory as it were *incognito*, dressed in the costume of a civilian, in a dark green great-coat with a Turkish scimitar. In this grotesque attire he seems sunburnt, emaciated, dried up: only in his eyes is there fire.

After the revolution which so narrowly escaped failure, Napoleon suddenly enlarges :

> In the centre of all there is the Ruler, watchful, prudent, far-seeing. He is seldom seen, except once every ten days, when he holds an inspection of troops in the Carrousel. His only relaxations are the austere sittings of the Institute, and the week-end parties at Malmaison, where he plays prisoners' base like a boy. When seen, he is scandalously ill-dressed ; Royalists say ugly ; all say short, save when he raises his head and glances with his eye ; then he seems suddenly to tower up. He is always learning and absorbing. All France seems to flow into that self-sustained vessel.

On Napoleon at St. Helena, chewing the cud of sweet and bitter memory, musing over the glories to which 18 Brumaire was the prelude—of this Napoleon, middle-aged, fat, often lethargic, but with fits of demoniac energy, now wasting hours in his bath, lying half the day in his unseemly bed in the squalid room at rat-haunted Longwood, but now again spending all the night in dictation to half a dozen amanuenses, quarrelling with Lowe, talking about women and food with his melancholy companions, complaining, loquacious, but withal dignified and still possessed of a magnetism which made British Ministers perpetually afraid lest he should get too good treatment ; of this Napoleon Lord Rosebery has left a picture, that could, for what it is, scarcely be bettered.

Though there is an immensity of literature on the subject of the imprisonment there seems, to quote Lord Rosebery, to have been " something in the air of St. Helena that blighted exact truth," and the uncritical and uninstructed reader who ventures into the morass of French and English memoirs merely invites bewilderment. Lord Rosebery's work has therefore a double value. For most people it will give, in the most readable form, all they wish to know about St. Helena, and a great deal incidentally about Napoleon long before he saw that horrible island. For the man who wishes to go more deeply into the subject *The Last Phase* is an admirable guide and *catalogue raisonné* of authorities. As a piece of literature it exhibits at

their best the most characteristic virtues of the author, with less than usual of his defects. On the whole it is a sympathetic picture. Napoleon's colossal egotism is not concealed ; he expected all his little Court to think of him and him only, and was angry with this General for talking about his wife and with that for longing to see his mother. But there was another side, sometimes humorously, sometimes pathetically displayed. To Gorgaud, the most jealous and self-tormenting of his companions, he recommends a " remedy or a sedative unique perhaps among moral and intellectual prescriptions "—it is that the General should set himself to translate the *Annual Register* into French. At another time Napoleon talks about getting an English bride with a fortune of £30,000—so optimistic does he profess himself as to his release—for the same retainer, and promises that he will visit the happy couple and enjoy fox-hunting with them. At another time we find him almost humbly trying to coax Gorgaud into a better humour :

> He pinches his ear—the well-known sign of his affection and good-humour. " Why are you so sad ? What is the matter with you ? Pluck up and be gay, Gorgo, Gorgotto. We will set about a book together, my son, Gorgo." Gorgo, Gorgotto, does not record his reception of these advances. Next day, however, there is the same half-piteous appeal, " Gorgo, Gorgotto, my son."

Napoleon, in short, was, behind all his theatricalities, intensely human, and in Lord Rosebery he has a human biographer, who, while genially laughing at his shooting Madame Bertrand's pet kids and his talks of food and women, does full justice to the dignity and stoicism with which, on the whole, he endured a captivity made needlessly uncomfortable. All that was generous in Lord Rosebery revolted against the meanness of Lowe and Bathurst, and, while he says it would be well if the sombre episode of St. Helena could be blotted out of history, in the interests both of Great Britain and of Napoleon, he clearly thinks the balance of advantage would be to Britain, since the impartial verdict of posterity must " record that Napoleon was then stripped

and powerless, while Britain was triumphant and overwhelmingly strong." Britain, he holds, could have been chivalrous to the illustrious vanquished without sacrificing security and without unfaithfulness to an odious duty.

Chatham: His Early Life and Connections, is on the whole a less satisfactory piece of work. Lord Rosebery says justly enough that the life of Chatham during his days of glory cannot be written because the human aspect of that great man was so sedulously concealed. "Chatham seems to have cut off all vestiges of his real self as completely as a successful fugitive from justice," and by his careful disguise made himself "a pre-historic or rather a pre-biographical figure, a man of the fifteenth century, or earlier." On the other hand the Dropmore Papers, which are the basis of Lord Rosebery's study, do throw much new light on Chatham's youth and unrestrained days. The light, however, is often darkness, in the sense that it rather increases than diminishes the difficulty of understanding how the man who did such dull things and wrote such dull letters could so impress his personality on the House of Commons and the nation. Almost everybody mentioned in the book is more interesting than its hero. We read with zest Lord Rosebery's vivid historical summary. After all that Lecky and Macaulay have written, there is freshness as well as vigour in the portraits of Walpole, the Temples, the Pelhams, Murray, Carteret, and the elder Fox. We are not uninterested in the familiar but always intriguing story of the hatred of George II and his Queen for their eldest son, "the greatest beast and liar and scoundrel in existence," as his father called him. For this is one of the unsolved puzzles of history; the virulence of parental detestation remains much of a mystery when every explanation has been offered. "Frederick," says Lord Rosebery, "was a poor creature, no doubt, a vain and fatuous coxcomb. But," he adds dryly, "human beings are constantly the parents of coxcombs without regarding them as vermin."

A pedantic criticism might suggest that in a biographical work long digressions on such matters are out of place. But in fact it is the digressions that make *Chatham*. The book is excellent regarded as a narrative of things in general. It only begins to be dull when it deals with its hero. But the fact could hardly be otherwise, for in truth William Pitt, without his four years of glory, would have been less interesting than Mr. Lloyd George had the latter left the political stage at the beginning of 1914. The early Pitt, despite the eloquence which we have to take on trust (though its remarkable character is apparent enough in the effect it produced on contemporaries), was simply a pushing politician, and not a particularly scrupulous one ; and Macaulay showed a sound instinct in making the narrative of his early life as short and general as possible. Lord Rosebery admits as much, and even his great powers have not been able to invest with much glamour the period of Pitt's obscure youth, when he is simply dull ; the period of his irresponsible opposition, when he is simply factious ; or the period of his subordinate office, when he is meekly complaisant. The story of how he forced himself at length into the conduct of affairs is more interesting, but on the whole hardly more splendid ; as in a more recent case, such means to self-elevation could only be justified by the end ; and the brilliant justification does not come within the scope of Lord Rosebery's volume.

"The path of the statesman," concludes the author, who certainly knew something of the subject, "rarely skirts the heights ; it is rough, rugged, sometimes squalid, as are most of the roads of life. We are apt to make idols, to ignore shadows, and to fancy that we see stars ; not too apt, for it is an illuminating worship. . . . All careers have their blots. The best and happiest are those in which the blemishes are obscured by high achievement. That was supremely the case with Pitt. His upward ascent was much like other ascents, neither better nor worse. But when he reached the summit and acted in full light and

freedom, his triumph was so complete that none deem it worth while to scan his previous record."

That, however, is exactly what the author of *Chatham* does, and the effect, artistically, is unfortunate. *Chatham* is not Cromwell with his wart. It is Cromwell all wart, or nearly so.

Interesting as they are, abounding in brilliant touches, pregnant with shrewd observation, enlivened by an urbane wit, and informed with the double distinction of the polished artist and the accomplished man of the world, Lord Rosebery's more ambitious works are on the whole less successful than his short studies. His great gift, that of vivid summary, suggesting more than is set down, was employed to the highest advantage in the historical essay, and in this genre he might, had he bent his mind to it, have rivalled Macaulay. But in literature, as in politics, he lay under the handicap of his temperament and circumstances—of the demands of competing tastes, the distractions of a great position, his imperfect mastery of the warring elements of his own mind and character. He was less a statesman than a grandee with a taste and capacity for statesmanship. He was more the literary nobleman than the noble of letters.

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